Hello
my name is

ACTIVISM,
ABOLITION,
ANTI OPPRESSION.

the first issue

A TOOLKIT
for HUMANS
    to BUILD + MAINTAIN
a world worth fighting for

CITY DEER

ARE SELDOM SEEN,
but ALWAYS THERE
they choose when to emerge
TIMID - NOT AFRAID.
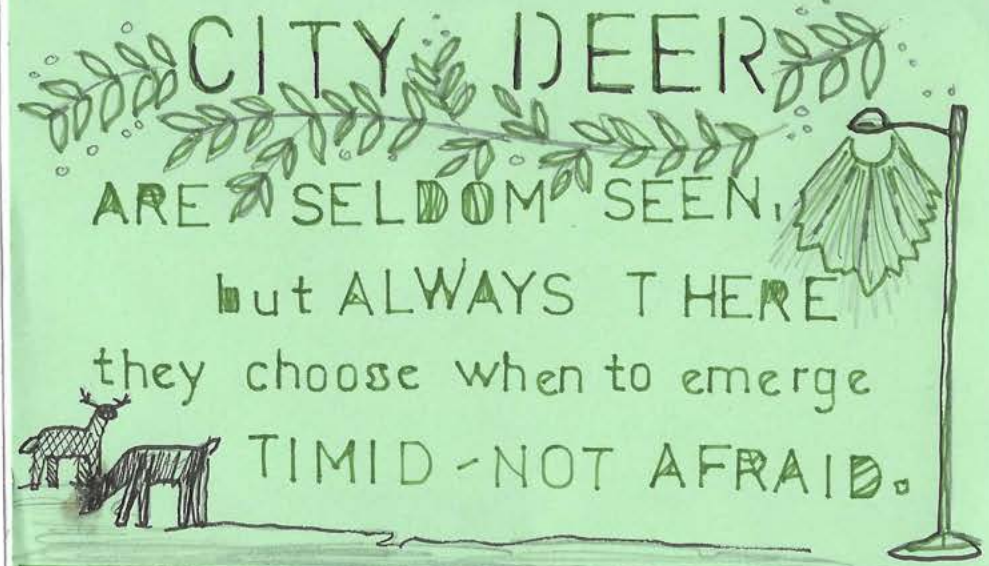
the city deer of PGH

Are your friends and neighbors.
EST 2020
Working towards these goals:

Strengthen our communities and form bridges and bonds with others doing the work in Pittsburgh.

Put into the hands and hearts of many the tools and tactics of building a shared future that has no room for supremacy(in any form) or oppression.

WE GROW IN TANDEM
WE GROW TOGETHER

citydeerofpgh@protonmail.com

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At School

- Wage campaigns to **remove police from schools**, including elementary, secondary and higher education institutions. These efforts can be led by student groups, teacher's unions, or parent associations, on their own or in coalitions.

- Protest and **shut down police recruitment campaigns**, for example at job fairs or career days.

- **Oppose police institutions using schools** for their own purposes, whether through research partnerships that "reform" police while rebuilding their legitimacy, or efforts to house riot police during major protests.

On the Job

- Join with co-workers to **disrupt material support for police departments** or refuse service to cops, like the UPS workers who carried out a Hands Up, Don't Ship action in Minneapolis. Remember, there is strength in numbers! Coordinate with co-workers to minimize the bosses' retaliation for these kinds of actions.

- Demand that labor unions **disaffiliate from police unions**, like teaching assistants in California recently demanded of the AFL-CIO.

- Within existing job-related organizations, develop the collective's capacity to **defend against police repression**. Study and develop strategies & tactics for out-maneuvering the police when you need to defend picket lines, building occupations, or other protest actions. Bosses and cops work hand in hand to keep workers from winning any power on the job.

- Organize **Know Your Rights workshops** to minimize the legal impact of police interactions, whether on strike or at any other time.

In the Streets

- Encourage neighbors to **refuse to talk to the police** when they come snooping around the neighborhood. Protest and discredit police programs that incentivize neighbors to snitch and thus contribute to each others' criminalization and incarceration.

- Build **neighborhood networks** to intervene in police activity wherever it happens. Forms of this are already popping up around the U.S. and can be activated through existing lines of communication from ongoing community, workplace or housing organizing. Draw examples from copwatch on how to record police interactions, but don't stop at monitoring the police. Create a collective culture of resistance that intervenes and deters police from using force and arresting vulnerable targets.

- Build women, queer and trans led groups to **defend ourselves against street harassment and queer bashing**. When we are able to defend ourselves, we won't have to rely on the same police who harass us in times of crisis.

- Organize campaigns to **repeal repressive police policies** at local, state and federal levels, like Stop-and-Frisk in New York City or Civil Gang Injunctions in Houston.

- **Prevent the construction of police stations** and other facilities through protests and blockades. Set up informational tables outside of police stations and storefront locations to raise awareness about attempts to expand heavily policed areas.

- Support a **militant protest culture** to stop police from controlling and undermining demonstrations, and prevent arrests in the streets.

▲ ☆ **Women's Center and Shelter** *24 hours wcspittsburgh.org* ✽●□■❖☼⌂▥
☎ *Call:412-687-8005 Text:412-744-8445*
Emergency shelter for adults experiencing domestic violence and their children. Safe harbor that provides specialized care and support for survivors who have experienced all types of intimate partner violence from physical to emotional through Emergency Shelter, Legal Advocacy, a 24-Hour Hotline, Support Groups, and more.

▲ ☆ **Prevention Point PGH** *412-247-3404* ▶▶ ▥ □■ ⌂~
Harm Reduction| safer injection supplies, case management services, education on HIV and Hep C prevention, overdose prevention and response training, naloxone distribution, testing, assistance to recovery treatment, health care, housing, food, etc.

~ ☆ **Central Outreach.com** *text: 412-322-4151* ▶▶ ▥ ⌂
lgbtqia competent healthcare. Primary Care, STI, HIV, HEP testing, HRT access and support. Harm reduction competent, rehab and recovery services. Pharmacy discounts.

~ ☆ **Pittsburgh Mutual Aid.com** *Call/text 412-301-6127* ▶
You can get or give help with buying groceries/food, running errands, financial assistance, finding housing, and more. They have a portal on their website of resources to check out. You can get involved.

◐ limited hours call support ☎ 24 hour call support   ☆ Pittsburgh specific
▲ immediate support (and referral) ～referral and resource hub ⌂ mobile unit & possible police
Type of service: ✽crisis ▥ medical ♡ mental health ●violence □housing ▶▶harm reduction
Services for: ▥ houseless ▦ LGBTQ+ ✦families ☼youth ⊕elders ▶any human//example: bigburgh
These symbols were assigned based on each resources' mission statements. This list is not comprehensive.
Symbols may not fully express the range of services and support offered, they are used here to help with ease of access.

THIS LIST IS NOT COMPREHENSIVE.
IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO COLLECT YOUR OWN LIST OF RESOURCES/SERVICES/CONTACTS/EMERGENCY PLAN.
ONE WAY TO MAKE POLICE OBSOLETE, IS TO STOP CALLING THEM.
THERE ARE PLENTY OF OTHER MORE COMPETENT AND COMPASSIONATE SERVICES OUT THERE.
Contact: yourneighborpgh@gmail.com

At Home

- Develop community "phone trees" and **rapid response networks** to relay important information, alert folks to police checkpoints, raids or surveillance, and respond to threats from the police in real time. Record police conduct, take collective action to stop police violence when it is happening, and care for those victimized by it.

- Study and share **conflict mediation skills**, so that minor beefs like noise complaints can be settled between neighbors without involving the police. Begin building these skills in neighborhood and tenant associations.

- Build survivor-led groups to **defend against domestic violence and sexual assault**. People turn to the cops when they have no other way to address violence in private spaces, but alternatives like support networks, crisis centers and self-defense groups can begin to leave police intervention behind.

- Fight against eviction, whether from a house, an apartment, or a tent. Police exist to protect the property of landlords and bosses and enforce their ability to make working class folks pay for access to it. **Build tenants' unions, solidarity networks, eviction defense groups**, or other organizations that can defend a neighbor's access to keeping a roof over their head, regardless of their ability to pay for it. When the police get called in to enforce an eviction, be there to keep them out and keep a neighbor in their home.

AN EXCERPT FROM
"A WORLD WITHOUT POLICE"

10

Hold and attend de-escalation, conflict resolution, first-aid, volunteer medic, and self-defense workshops in your neighborhood, school, workplace, or community organization.

11

Street art is beautiful! Don't report graffiti and other street artists. If you see work that includes fascistic or hate speech, paint over it yourself or with friends.

12

Remember that police can escalate domestic violence situations. You can support friends and neighbors who are being victimized by abusers by offering them a place to stay, a ride to a safe location, or to watch their children. Utilize community resources like safe houses and hotlines.

SOME OF US WERE INTRODUCED TO REVOLUTION MANY MOONS AGO, OTHERS HAVE JUST BEGUN OUR FIGHTS. WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF THOSE THAT CAME BEFORE, AND IT IS OUR DUTY TO KEEP LIFTING AND FIGHTING AND PASSING THE TORCH.

WHILE WE ALL FIND OUR OWN PLACES IN THE COLLECTIVE FIGHT, WE MUST LEARN FROM THE MANY VOICES, HANDS, AND HEARTS OF THOSE AROUND US. EACH OF US BRING UNIQUE AND VALUED EXPERIENCES AND SKILLS. TO LEARN FROM OTHERS IS A GIFT.

WE ARE WORKING TOWARDS A SHARED GOAL, ONE THAT REQUIRES A MULTI-TOOL. WE CAN LEARN AND GROW TOGETHER. WITH ALL OF OUR COMBINED STRENGTHS, WE CAN BUILD A WORLD WORTH FIGHTING FOR.

THE FOLLOWING IS A COMPILATION OF CHOSEN WORKS PRODUCED BY INDIVIDUALS AND COLLECTIVES FROM ALL OVER. REACHING THROUGH SPACE AND TIME TO PRESENT A STARTER-PACK OF SELECTED PRINCIPLES, PRACTICES, FRAMEWORKS, AND TACTICS. THIS ISSUE PRESENTS **ACTIVISM, ABOLITION, ANTI-OPPRESSION** AND SURROUNDING SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT.

THESE EXCERPTS WERE GLUED TOGETHER IN "PGH, PA," SUMMER 2020. WE LONG FOR EMPOWERED INDIVIDUALS, STRENGTHENED COMMUNITIES. A DREAM CAN BE A NECESSITY.

IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THIS TO BE COMPLETE, IT IS A MATCH THAT YOU CAN CARRY, and STRIKE. TO SPARK FOR THE FIRST TIME, OR TO CATCH AN OLD COAL. A MEET-CUTE WITH REVOLUTION, OR REKINDLING AN OLD FLAME.

love and solidarity,
the City Deer of Pittsburgh

"Hello my name is..." issue 1

CONTENTS

this is a compilation of zines, articles, papers, etc. authors and editors, individuals and collectives are cited and credited here. thanks so much.
for a pdf/ printable version of this zine; and for a clickable works cited page; and for all other inquiries:
Contact: citydeerofpgh@protonmail.com
Compiled by CDP, 2020. anti-copyright. always free.

✨ =Pittsburgh Specific

5

Keep a contact list of community resources like suicide hotlines. When police are contacted to "manage" such situations, people with mental illness are sixteen times more likely to be killed by cops than those without mental health challenges.

6

Check your impulse to call the police on someone you believe looks or is acting "suspicious." Is their race, gender, ethnicity, class, or housing situation influencing your choice? Such calls can be death sentences for many people.

7

Encourage teachers, coworkers, and organizers to avoid inviting police into classrooms, workplaces, and public spaces. Instead, create for a culture of taking care of each other and not unwittingly putting people in harm's way. If you're part of a group that's holding a rally or demonstration, don't get a permit or otherwise cooperate with the police.

8

If your neighbor is having a party and the noise is bothering you, go over and talk to them. Getting to know your neighbors with community events like monthly block parties is a good way to make asking them to quiet down a little less uncomfortable, or to find another neighbor who is willing to do so.

9

If you see someone peeing in public, just look away! Remember, for example, that many houseless people do not have reliable access to bathrooms.

1

Don't feel obligated to defend property—especially corporate "private" property. Before confronting someone or contacting the police, ask yourself if anyone is being hurt or endangered by property "theft" or damage. If the answer is "no," then let it be.

2

If something of yours is stolen and you need to file a report for insurance or other purposes, consider going to the police station instead of bringing cops into your community. You may inadvertently be putting someone in your neighborhood at risk.

3

If you observe someone exhibiting behavior that seems "odd" to you, don't assume that they are publicly intoxicated. A traumatic brain injury or a similar medical episode may be occurring. Ask if they are OK, if they have a medical condition, and if they need assistance.

4

If you see someone pulled over with car trouble, stop and ask if they need help or if you can call a tow truck for them. If the police are introduced to such a situation, they may give punitive and unnecessary tickets to people with car issues, target those without papers, or worse.

Hello my name is

ACTIVISM

Calling the police often escalates situations, puts people at risk, and leads to violence. Anytime you seek help from the police, you're inviting them into your community and putting people who may already be vulnerable into dangerous situations. Sometimes people feel that calling the police is the only way to deal with problems. But we can build trusted networks of mutual aid that allow us to better handle conflicts ourselves and move toward forms of trans-formative justice, while keeping police away from our neighborhoods.

12 THINGS TO DO INSTEAD OF CALLING THE COPS

BY:
MAYDAY COLLECTIVE
& WASHTENAW SOLIDARITY
& DEFENSE

Hello my name is

PLANNED (OBSOLESCENCE

" STRONG
   COMMUNITIES
       make police
           OBSOLETE "

Know Your RIGHTS

The First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

You have the right to assemble, but there is no guarantee that the state to which you've granted the ability to legitimize this right will grant you the courtesy to exercise it. Therefore, it is important to understand the boundaries of your rights in the eyes of the state. Remember that when you stand up in protest or in solidarity, you become an immediate threat to those you oppose, Standing up to your government, the police, or fascists (as blurry as the line between can sometimes be) makes you a target. It is important to be prepared to be treated as a criminal in spaces of resistance, so you are prepared for the occasion that you become criminalized. Here are some quick tips and reminders:

- *Public v private spaces*
  - The first amendment typically grants you free speech rights on public property, but not private. Be aware of the boundaries between the two, and understand your limits and willingness to risk arrest if you test those boundaries.
- *It is legal to film police*
  - Cops may legitimately order cease of activities that are truly interfering with legitimate law enforcement operations.
  - Cops may not confiscate or demand to view your digital photos/videos without a warrant
  - Cops may not delete your photographs or videos
  - COPS WILL LIE about what they may or may not do
- *If police ask to see your phone, tell them you do not consent to the search of your device*
  - If asked for password, politely refuse
  - Police can't compel, but they can pressure, and they will LIE.
- *If stopped, ask - "Am I free to go?" if not - you are detained & there must be cause*
  - You are required to identify yourself (name and address) if asked by police to do so
  - If detained, politely ask what crime you are suspected of committing
  - Other than the above, do not talk to cops
  - OTHER THAN THE ABOVE, DO NOT TALK TO COPS
  - COPS WILL LIE about the information you are required to provide if detained.

Safety

There is always risk in public demonstrations of resistance and/or solidarity. It is a good idea to educate yourself on your rights and the potential risks of any particular action or protest before participating. While it is good to be cautious, be cautious that you don't let caution prevent you from taking action. While one can never eliminate risk entirely, it is possible to minimize it.

Following are some tips for staying safe summarized from "Health and Safety at Militant Actions" zine: https://www.sproutdistro.com/catalog/zines/direct-action/health-and-safety-at-militant-actions/

- Make a plan of action with friends or affinity group
- Be aware of your surroundings
- BUDDY SYSTEM always
- Protect your privacy
- Prepare an exit route/meetup spot
- Smile, you're on camera
  - Do not assume you are not being filmed, and if you are filming, please respect the privacy of others.
- Get lots of rest and water before demonstration
- Have a safe space in mind at all times
- Assume riot cops may be coming
- Don't panic; help others stay calm
- Know your options, and what you and your comrades intend to do if arrested
- Know what to do if exposed to teargas
- Know how to minimize effects of teargas
- Know how to deal with anxiety
- Do not wear earrings, piercings, necklaces, ties, etc.
- Tuck long hair out of the way
- Do not wear contact lenses
- Write the legal support number on your arm
- Don't act on rumors
- Always consider the impact your actions will have on those most vulnerable
- Don't leave your friends behind! Watch out for those who may be targeted by the state or disrupters.
- Be aware that if we let our fear win, we let this system and its agents win

3

7 - Power awareness

All of this requires awareness of power dynamics. People often don't feel free, safe, and able enough to tune into themselves and to be open about their needs, limits, wants and boundaries. This is generally because they fear implicit or explicit punishment.

We all need to keep asking ourselves what we can do to make it genuinely possible for others to make - and articulate - consensual choices in their relationships and encounters with us. Unless somebody really feels able to say 'no' to us, without fear of the potential impact of that, then they're not in consent. It needs to be just as easy for them to say 'no', 'I'm not sure', 'maybe under these conditions', or 'I'm not ready yet' as it is to say 'yes' or any version of 'yes'.

It's worth reflecting on what forms of power we have in any dynamic, culturally or personally:

Culturally, we might consider where we - and another person - are at in relation to each other on gender, race, disability, sexuality, class, age, and any other relevant intersecting axes of privilege and oppression.

Personally, we might consider aspects like how much money we each earn, how much security we have in various ways, where our health is currently at, what our histories are with trauma and/or mental health, what other relationships we have and how those are, how much experience we have relevant to our interaction, how attractive and/or successful we're seen as by the wider world, etc.

We might have ongoing open conversations about these things and how they impact us and our dynamic. For more one-off encounters, we might check in with ourselves and each other more briefly about what might be present in the dynamic that makes it easier/more difficult to consent, and how we'll do our best to mitigate that.

We might decide that a power imbalance is too great for a certain kind of relationship to be possible, or that we need to go very slowly in order to keep checking in given the disparities that are in place. We may need to take time over such conversations in order to build enough trust to be able to share these things with each other, but as always that should be preferable to the non-consent of pressing ahead before everyone has the information and awareness they need.

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FOR MORE FROM
MEG - JOHN BARKER
rewriting-the-rules.com

Consent at Every Level

Non-consent is normalised at every level: wider culture, our institutions and communities, our interpersonal relationships and everyday interactions, and within ourselves (self-consent). You could go through this diagram considering the messages you received about consent - and how consensually you were treated - at each level growing up, and the same for now.

Wider Culture

Community / Institutions

Interpersonal Relationships

Self
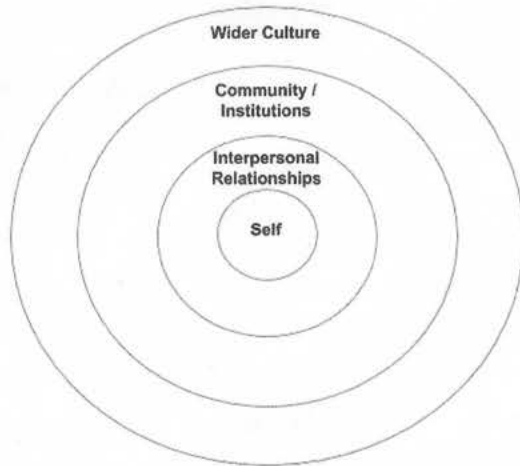
Given this, it's worth thinking about how - at each level - we might shift the micro-culture around us in order for interactions and relationships to become more consensual, as well as what systems and structures we might bring in to support that. It's important to be gentle with ourselves and others: to recognise that we're up against years of training in habits of being non-consensual, within wider systems and structures that support non-consensual behaviour.

It's also vital to remember this isn't just about sex, it's about everything. The extent of non-consensual sex may be the thing that's shown us how important consent is, but:

1. We will struggle hugely to practise consensual sex if the relationship that the sex is happening within is non-consensual in other ways, or if people have deeply non-consensual relationships with themselves because of the wider culture around them and how they've been taught to treat themselves.
2. We can damage ourselves - and each other - just as much with other forms of non-consent as with sexual non-consent, and these forms of coercion, pressure, persuasion, bullying or manipulation can often be more insidious and harder to recognise given how culturally normalised they are.

3

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CAN'T TOUCH THIS NYC

5 Principles For The Anti-Police Brutality Movement
Written by Can't Touch This NYC

1. We will respect a diversity of tactics in the streets, as they reflect a diversity of political perspectives within our movement. We will not physically prevent fellow demonstrators from taking actions they deem necessary.

2. While we may debate and disagree, we will not denounce fellow protesters in public statements in a manner that exposes them to state repression. We will not denounce protesters for engaging in self-defense or property damage.

3. We refuse to cooperate with politicians in legitimizing the repression of other parts of our movement. We will not accept this as a condition for dialogue with city officials.

4. We refuse to help police repress our movement. We will not help police identify and prosecute protesters, nor hand protesters into police custody, nor provide general intelligence on our movement.

5. We will avoid posting and circulating sensitive visual information on social media, as police use social media to collect incriminating evidence against protesters. We will not collaborate with the media to make such information publicly available.

Come Prepared:

Wear clothes you feel comfortable moving in, running shoes, and layers for weather. Bring water, an energy bar, and a bandana in case of surveillance.

Roll With A Crew:

We roll together in "affinity groups." Before the march, share your contact info, legal and medical issues, and what to do in case of arrest. Have each others' backs in the streets. Leave together.

FTP
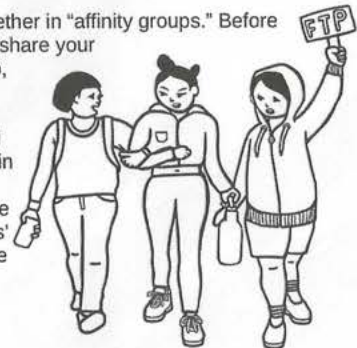
Take The Streets, Stay Together:

The streets are our voice. Pigs will work to split us apart, force us onto the sidewalk, kettle us, and snatch people. Stay tight so they can't grab stragglers, regroup if we get divided, and take as many lanes as possible.
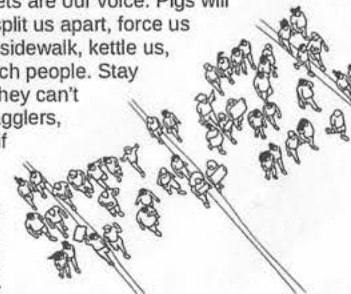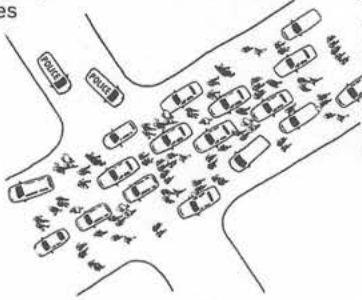
Quick At The Corners:

Pigs use intersections to split the march and push us onto the sidewalk. Move fast to get ahead of their lines, flow around or push through them to stay in the street.
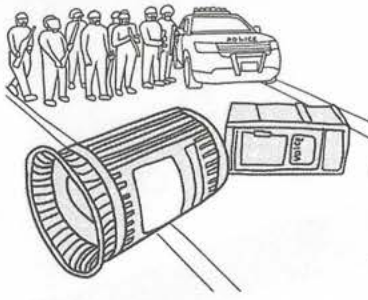
SWOOSH!

4
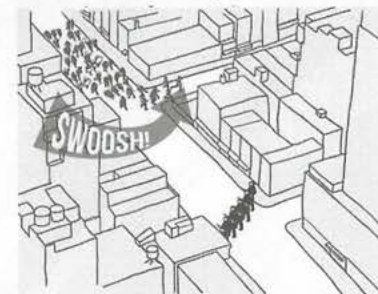
With And Against Traffic:

We march with traffic in order to keep the march together, and against traffic when we need to lose vehicles or lines of cops that are tailing us.

Barricade The Back:

Drag objects into the street behind the march to break up vehicles or lines of cops following us. These light blockages will also slow traffic and help us shut it down.

Get Free Or Get Moving:

If someone is arrested, don't linger too long or pigs will kettle the march. Free the comrade, or else get their name and birthday for jail support and keep it moving.

Diversity Of Tactics:

Everyone is free to support the cause as they see fit. We don't police each other's actions, or snitch on each other to pigs or the media. At the same time, we take care not to endanger others with our actions.

Support Those Directly Affected:

We support the leadership of people who are directly affected by the issue at hand. Those of us with different privileges shoulder risks and burdens when others can't. Talk to people you are struggling with. The stronger our relationships, the stronger the movement and less cooptable it is.
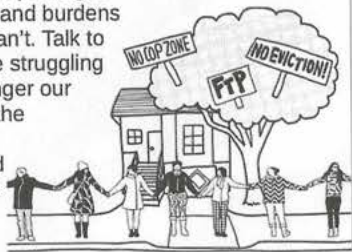
Jail Support

( ) -

Write this # on your body & call if arrested! If you witness someone else being arrested, ask them for the following info:

NAME
(legal and actual names, if different)
BIRTHDAY
TIME & LOCATION of ARREST

Then call the number above to report the arrest and request support.

Meeting Practices

· It is the role of the facilitator to ensure that the space safe and welcoming for everyone and the responsibility of each groups member to contribute to this.

· Become a good listener

· Don't interrupt people who are speaking

· Be conscious of how your use of language may perpetuate racism, sexism, homophobia or ageism

· Try not to call people out because they are not speaking

· Be conscious of how much space you take up or how much you speak in a group Practice "stepping up, stepping back" so we can each contribute to equal participation.

· Be careful of not hogging the show, speaking on every subject, speaking in capital letters, restating what others say or speaking for others

· Respect different views and opinions

· Balance race, gender and age participation

· People who haven't yet spoken get priority

· It is the group's responsibility to challenge racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic remarks.

This document is compiled by Lisa Fithian from the "Anti-Racism Principles and Practices" by RiseUp DAN-LA, Overcoming Masculine Oppression by Bill Moyers and the FEMMAFESTO by a women's affinity group in Philadelphia

Organizational Practices

· Commit time for organizational discussions on discrimination and oppression

· Commit time to learn about each other, to share stories about our lives, our history, our culture, our experiences

· Set anti-oppression goals and continually evaluate whether or not you are meeting them

· Promote an anti-racist, anti-heterosexist, anti-transphobic, anti-ableist message and analysis in everything we do, in and outside of activist space

· Remember these are complex issues and they need adequate time and space

· Create opportunities for people to develop skills to communicate about oppression.

· Promote egalitarian group development by prioritizing skill shares and being aware of who tends to do what work, who gets recognized/supported/solicited.

· Respect different styles of leadership and communication

· Don't push historically marginalized people to do things because of their oppressed group (tokenism); base it on their work, experience, and skills

· Make a collective commitment to hold people accountable for their behavior so that the organization can be a safe and nurturing place for all.

Intro...

This is a reprint of a guide called "What is Security Culture?" published by the CrimethInc collective. As far as we know, it first appeared in their book *Recipes for Disaster: An Anarchist Cookbook* and then appeared in a slightly updated form in 2009 on their website, Crimethinc.com.

We're reprinting this because the information contained within cannot be shared enough within our communities. Over the past several years, we've seen various instances of anarchists getting serious federal charges. Eric McDavid was entrapped by a federal informant — Anna — with whom he hatched a plot to blow up a dam and was later sentenced to several years in prison. At the 2008 protests against the Republican National Convention (RNC), several folks were entrapped by federal informants — Bradley Crowder, David McKay, and Matthew Depalma. While one certainly can't say that more easily accessible information on security culture would have prevented these situations, it seems that the more widely available the information is the safer we will all be.

We chose to reprint this guide specifically because it focuses on general principles — rather than specific tactics — necessary to building secure communities of resistance. Please read this guide, share it, enact these principles in your life, and explain them to people who aren't familiar with them. Most importantly, please, please take security culture seriously.

Finally, folks would also do well to do some additional research on the subject of social networking and computer security. As computers dominate more and more of our lives, it is important that folks think about the risks that their use can pose for those in conflict with the state.

Love and Rage,
Sprout Anarchist Collective // www.sproutac.org

WHAT IS SECURITY CULTURE?

← ZINE LOOKS LIKE THIS

CrimethInc has been around for decades, check out their resource library. Sprout distro has a *bunch* of zines you can print. Heck, go ahead and g00gl3: FREE ZINE PDFS

A GUIDE TO STAYING SAFE...

What is Security Culture?

A security culture is a set of customs shared by a community whose members may be targeted by the government, designed to minimize risk.

Having a security culture in place saves everyone the trouble of having to work out safety measures over and over from scratch, and can help offset paranoia and panic in stressful situations—hell, it might keep you out of prison, too. The difference between protocol and culture is that culture becomes unconscious, instinctive, and thus effortless; once the safest possible behavior has become habitual for everyone in the circles in which you travel, you can spend less time and energy emphasizing the need for it, or suffering the consequences of not having it, or worrying about how much danger you're in, as you'll know you're already doing everything you can to be careful. If you're in the habit of not giving away anything sensitive about yourself, you can collaborate with strangers without having to agonize about whether or not they are informers; if everyone knows what not to talk about over the telephone, your enemies can tap the line all they want and it won't get them anywhere.

The central principle of all security culture, the point that cannot be emphasized enough, is that people should never be privy to any sensitive information they do not need to know.

The greater the number of people who know something that can put individuals or projects at risk—whether that something be the identity of a person who committed an illegal act, the location of a private meeting, or a plan for future activity—the more chance there is of the knowledge getting into the wrong hands. Sharing such information with people who do not need it does them a disservice as well as the ones it puts at risk: it places them in the uncomfortable situation of being able to mess up other people's lives with a single misstep. If they are interrogated, for example, they will have something to hide, rather than being able to honestly claim ignorance.

Don't ask, don't tell.

Don't ask others to share confidential information you don't need to know. Don't brag about illegal things you or others have done, or mention things that are going to happen or might happen, or even refer to another person's interest in being involved in such activities. Stay aware whenever you speak; don't let chance allusions drop out thoughtlessly.

7

PRACTICES.   Personal Practices

· Challenge yourself to be honest and open and take risks to address racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia head on.

· When you witness or experience an abuse of power or oppression interrupt the behavior and address it on the spot or later, either one on one, or with a few allies; this is about ways to address oppressive behavior that will encourage change.

· Challenge the behavior not the person. Be sensitive and promote open dialogue.

· Don't generalize feelings, thoughts, behaviors, etc to a whole group.

· Recognize the when someone offers criticism around oppressive behavior, to treat it as a gift that it is rather than challenging the person or invalidating their experience. Give people the benefit of the doubt and don't make assumptions.

· Be willing to lose a friend but try not to "thrown away" people who fuck up because you don't want to be associated with them. Help them admit what they did and help them take responsibility for making reparations for their behavior.

· Challenge "macho bravado" and "rugged individualism" in yourself, your friends and in activism.

· Take on the "grunt" work of cooking, cleaning, set up, clean up, phone calls, e-mail, taking notes, doing support work, sending mailings. Take active responsibility for initiating, volunteering for and following through with this work.

· Understand that you will feel discomfort and pain as you face your part in oppression, and realize that this is a necessary part of the process of liberation and growth. We must support each other and be gentle with each other in this process.

· Don't feel guilty, feel responsible. Being part of the problem doesn't mean you can't be an active part of the solution.

· Maintain these practices and contribute equal time and energy to building healthy relationships, both personal and political.

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ANTI-OPPRESSION
PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

In order to build a world free from domination, we will use the following principles and practices in our lives and in our work.

PRINCIPLES

1. Power and privilege can play out in our group dynamics in destructive ways. We must challenge supremacist practices which marginalize, exclude or de-humanize others. Privilege, like power can be used for positive purposes but should be used with awareness and care.

2. We can only identify how power and privilege play out when we are conscious and committed to understanding how white supremacy, patriarchy, classism, heterosexism and all other systems of oppression affect each one of us. Each person who enjoys privileges granted by systems of prejudicial power (no matter how radical or revolutionary) must recognize the benefits and costs of their privileges. We must take responsibility for our prejudices and actions which perpetuate oppression.

3. Until we are clearly committed to anti-oppression practice, all forms of oppression will continue to divide our movements and weaken our power.

4. Developing anti-oppression practices is life-long work and requires a life-long commitment. No single workshop is sufficient for learning to change one's behaviors. We are all vulnerable to being oppressive and we need to continuously struggle with these issues and behaviors.

5. Dialogue and discussion are necessary and we need to learn how to listen non-defensively and communicate respectfully if we are going to have effective anti-oppression practice.

You can say "no" at any time to anyone about anything.

Don't answer any questions you don't want to—not just with police officers, but also with other activists and even close friends: if there's something you don't feel safe sharing, don't. This also means being comfortable with others not answering questions: if there's a conversation they want to keep to themselves, or they ask you not to be part of a meeting or project, you shouldn't take this personally—it's for everyone's good that they're free to do so. Likewise, don't participate in any projects you don't feel good about, or collaborate with anyone you feel ill at ease with, or ignore your gut feeling in any situation; if something goes wrong and you get into trouble, you don't want to have any regrets. You're responsible for not letting anyone talk you into taking risks you're not ready for.

Don't ever turn your friends over to your enemies.

If captured, never, ever give up any information that could endanger anyone else. Some recommend an explicit oath be sworn by all participants in a direct action group: that way, in a worst-case scenario, when pressure might make it hard to distinguish between giving up a few harmless details and totally selling out, everyone will know exactly what commitments they made to each other.

Don't make it too easy for your enemies to figure out what you're up to.

Don't be too predictable in the methods you employ, or the targets you choose, or the times and places you meet to discuss things. Don't be too visible in the public aspects of the struggle in which you do your most serious direct action: keep your name off mailing lists and out of the media, perhaps avoid association with aboveground organizations and campaigns entirely. If you're involved in really serious clandestine activities with a few comrades, you may want to limit your interactions in public, if not avoid each other altogether. Federal agents can easily get access to the phone numbers dialed from your phone, and will use such lists to establish connections between individuals; the same goes for your email, and the books you check out from libraries, and especially social networking sites like Facebook.

Don't leave a trail: credit card use, gas cards, cell phone calls all leave a record of your motions, purchases, and contacts. Have a cover story, supported by verifiable facts, if you might need one. Be careful about what your trash could reveal about you—dropouts aren't the only ones who go dumpstering! Keep track of every written document and incriminating photocopy—keep them all in one place, so you can't accidentally forget one—and destroy them as soon as you don't need them. The fewer there are in the first place, the better; get used to using your memory. Make sure there aren't any ghosts of such writing left behind in impressions on the surfaces you were writing on, whether these be wooden desks or pads of paper. Assume that every use of computers leaves a trail, too.

Don't throw any direct action ideas around in public that you think you might want to try at some point.

Wait to propose an idea until you can gather a group of individuals that you expect will all be interested in trying it; the exception is the bosom companion with whom you brainstorm and hash out details in advance—safely outside your home and away from mixed company, of course. Don't propose your idea until you think the time is right for it to be tried. Invite only those you are pretty certain will want to join in—everyone you invite who doesn't end up participating is a needless security risk, and this can be doubly problematic if it turns out they feel your proposed activity is laughably dumb or morally wrong. Only invite people who can keep secrets—this is critical whether or not they decide to participate.

Develop a private shorthand for communicating with your comrades in public.

It's important to work out a way to communicate surreptitiously with your trusted friends about security issues and comfort levels while in public situations, such as at a meeting called to discuss possible direct action. Knowing how to gauge each other's feelings without others being able to tell that you are sending messages back and forth will save you the headache of trying to guess each other's thoughts about a situation or individual, and help you avoid acting strangely when you can't take your friend aside in the middle of things to compare notes. By the time you have convened a larger group to propose an action plan, you and your friends should be clear on what each other's intentions, willingness to run risks, levels of commitment, and opinions of others are, to save time and avoid unnecessary ambiguity. If you haven't been part of a direct action planning circle before, you'll be surprised how complicated and convoluted things can get even when everyone does arrive prepared.

Develop methods to establish the security level of a group or situation.

One quick procedure you can run at the beginning of a larger meeting at which not everyone is acquainted is the "vouched for" game: as each person introduces himself, all who can vouch for him raise their hands. Only vouch for those you are confident are worthy of your trust. Hopefully, each person is connected to the others by some link in the chain; either way, at least everybody knows how things stand. An activist who understands the importance of good security will not feel insulted in such a situation if there is no one present who can vouch for him and the others ask him to leave.

Meeting location is an important factor in security.

You don't want a place that can be monitored (no private residences), you don't

ANTI OPPRESS-ION

Hello

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IMAGINE
YOUR
NEIGHBORHOOD
WITHOUT
POLICE.

*write it. draw it. staple
it to a telephone pole.
it's time to build a new
world in the shell of the
old.*

---

want a place where you can be observed all together (not the park across from the site of the next day's actions), you don't want a place where you can be seen entering and leaving or that someone could enter unexpectedly—post scouts, lock the door once things get started, watch out for anything suspicious.[2] Small groups can take walks and chat; larger groups can meet in quiet outdoor settings—go hiking or camping, if there's time—or in private rooms in public buildings, such as library study rooms or empty classrooms. Best-case scenario: though he has no idea you're involved in direct action, you're close with the old guy who runs the café across town, and he doesn't mind letting you have the back room one afternoon for a private party, no questions asked.

Be aware of the reliability of those around you, especially those with whom you might collaborate in underground activities.

Be conscious of how long you've known people, how far back their involvement in your community and their lives outside of it can be traced, and what others' experiences with them have been. The friends you grew up with, if you still have any of them in your life, may be the best companions for direct action, as you are familiar with their strengths and weaknesses and the ways they handle pressure—and you know for a fact they are who they say they are. Make sure only to trust your safety and the safety of your projects to level-headed folks who share the same priorities and commitments and have nothing to prove. In the long term, strive to build up a community of people with long-standing friendships and experience acting together, with ties to other such communities.

Don't get too distracted worrying about whether people are infiltrators or not; if your security measures are effective, it shouldn't even matter.

Don't waste your energy and make yourself paranoid and unsociable suspecting everybody you meet. If you keep all sensitive information inside the circle of people it concerns, only collaborate with reliable and experienced friends whose history you can verify, and never give away anything about your private activities, agents and police informers will be powerless to gather evidence to use against you. A good security culture should make it practically irrelevant whether these vermin are active in your community or not. The important thing is not whether or not a person is involved with the cops, but whether or not he constitutes a security risk; if he is deemed insecure (double meaning intended), he should never be permitted to end up in a situation in which anyone's safety depends on him.

Learn and abide by the security expectations of each person you interact with, and respect differences in style.

To collaborate with others, you have to make sure they feel at home with you; even if you're not collaborating with them, you don't want to make them

uncomfortable or disregard a danger they understand better than you. When it comes to planning direct action, not abiding by the security culture accepted in a given community can wreck not only your chances to cooperate with others on a project, but the possibility of the project happening at all—for example, if you bring up an idea others were planning to try in a setting they deem insecure, they may be forced to abandon the plan as it may now be associated with them. Ask people to outline for you their specific security needs before you even broach the subject of direct action.

Let others know exactly what your needs are when it comes to security.

The corollary of abiding by others' expectations is that you must make it easy for others to abide by yours. At the beginning of any relationship in which your private political life may become an issue, emphasize that there are details of your activities that you need to keep to yourself. This can save you a lot of drama in situations that are already stressful enough; the last thing you need on returning from a secret mission gone awry is to end up in a fight with your lover: "But if you trusted me, you would tell me about this! How do I know you're not out there sleeping with…!" It's not a matter of trust—sensitive information isn't a reward to be earned or deserved.

Look out for other people.

Make explicit to those around you what risks you may pose to them with your presence or with actions you have planned, at least as much as you're able to without violating other precepts of security culture. Let them know to the extent you're able what risks you run yourself: for example, whether you can afford to be arrested (if there are outstanding warrants for you, if you are an undocumented migrant, etc.), what responsibilities you have to keep up with, whether you have any allergies. Don't imperil others with your decisions, especially if you're not able to provide concrete support should they somehow get arrested and charged on account of your behavior. If someone else drops a banner in an area immediately adjacent to a fire you set, the police might charge them with arson; even if the charges can't stick, you don't want to risk their ill will, or accidentally block their planned escape route. If you help initiate a breakaway march that leaves the permitted zone, try to make sure you keep your body between the police and others who have come along but don't necessarily understand the risks involved; if you escalate a spontaneous parade by engaging in property destruction, make sure others who were unprepared for this are not still standing around in confusion when the police show up. Whatever risky projects you undertake, make sure you're prepared to go about them intelligently, so no one else will have to run unexpected risks to help you out when you make mistakes.

The master narrative of segregated Black schools as less than integrated schools created a school system that categorized anything Black in education as deficient. The idea of reinscribing was my work to center intergenerational conversations about education in ways that afforded me the opportunity to hear and learn from my mother's educational story and for her to hear and learn from mine.

The figure was my attempt at imagining what it would look like for us to hold each other's story. What would holding and retelling my mother's story from a position of success and excellence and not dilapidated buildings mean for my educational advancement and for that of my children and my children's children?

In relation to Pittsburgh, what would it mean for Black students here to hold the educational stories (those in formal settings and those in informal settings) of elders in Pittsburgh?

SG: A big part of making police and prison abolitionism viable is identifying the real problems of social harm that communities face daily, and figuring out how those can be most holistically addressed.

I'm thinking, here, about how direct action and qualitative research can be intertwined… What is the power of qualitative research? How has it expanded your work? And how can we "DIY" its techniques and incorporate them into grassroots organizing?

GG: My research intermingles traditional sociology of education theory, African American studies, and feminist studies with more progressive concepts of justice that examine agency, empowerment, and action... This strategy requires that I forge collaborations in my approach to research and that I redefine, through my work, how research is done and how it is positioned. For me, scholarship is a form of storytelling that is negotiated and understood in the ways we co-create meaning at every stage of the research process, including the idea development and writing stages. I strive to collaborate across race, class, gender, sexuality, discipline, and organization type in my scholarship.

When I work this way, it is always a powerful learning process for me and, as feedback from my collaborators suggests, for others as well. Indeed, working this way does not always feel good because I have to be self-reflective and I have to position myself as both a knower and leaner.

Unfortunately, I have also chosen to work with people who are not at all collaborative--they have to be positioned as "knower"--or they won't do the project. This can be painful. Yet, even these moments teach me important lessons.

I think grassroots organizing is about working in this way - being okay whether you are the learner or the knower, working across disciplines, collaborating with people across differences, and co-creating meaning at every stage of the process.

SG: What do you think of 2020? What on Earth is this year trying to tell us?

GG: This year has me "all in my feelings." I grew up in a family where the politics of respectability dictated that you did not outwardly express anger and rage.

Over the years, I have had to learn how to allow myself to express these two emotions. But, 2020 has made me "feel" them. I think that is what this year is telling us. We need to "feel" what is happening – feel what is happening to other people, feel what we are doing to the earth.

Because we have had to slow down and feel things, more people are able to see what you (Suhail and others) have been saying about policing, for example. I also think 2020 is telling us that we have to do things differently. We have to change. My friend Michelle King, also known as the Learning Instigator, said that 2020 has signaled to her that *anything is possible.*

If I hold onto Michelle's words then I am able to imagine a way forward.

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sities or non-profits. I am also a qualitative researcher whose research is centered around educational stories that have been rendered invisible in America...

My scholarship starts with self-narrative as a form of portraiture that interrogates her educational experiences growing up in suburban Richmond, yet tethered to my Grandmother's front porch in rural Virginia. Blending the arts and sciences in my methodology, I use stories to capture the complex, dynamic, and multifaceted ways in which her positionality in and towards school is shaped by race, class, and gender.

Storytelling, in its simplest form, is a way of relating to and informing one another. As a researcher, I believe that there is a deeper benefit: telling stories offers a place where we can reflect and recast our individual stories to form a collective narrative that can be used as a catalyst for transformation.

Ultimately, my research suggests that reflective and interactive storytelling serves a function in uncovering and (re)covering our individual and collective stories so that we can be intentional in our efforts to dismantle systemic inequities. Finally, my most important work is that as a mother, wife, daughter, sister, niece, and cousin. These roles are central to my sense of self and influence all of the work that I do.

SG: What draws you to the intersection of race and education? What do you see at this intersection today--either within Pittsburgh or without?

GG: I did not come to my understandings of my academic role and purpose by chance. Education is central to my identity as Black woman born post-desegregation in a small rural town in central Virginia. I learned that political activism, hard work, and education were the methods typically used to overcome discrimination and racism.

I was born five years after my mother, along with four other students, integrated her high school in a rural school district. I started my schooling in that same school system and when I turned eight years old, I attended schools in a well-funded suburban district. I grew up keenly aware that the educational narratives that I heard at home were different from the educational narratives being presented to me in integrated schools...

I wanted to better understand why after laws, policies, and well-articulated intentions, there were still so many inequities in education. My initial questions arose from my own schooling. Why were there not more Black and Brown kids in my honors classes? Later, my questions evolved from interrogating individual experiences to probing systemic realities. Why were all the poor kids in technical education? Why did I not have more Black teachers?

Questions like these, coupled with my desire to learn more about how to better address inequities in education, are the foundation of my teaching, scholarship and service.

Pittsburgh has a long way to go in terms of educational equity. Listening to the stories of Black students and other students of color, you hear the anger, grief, and frustration with a system not designed in their best interest. You often hear fair and honest critiques of educators actively working to steal their joy and passion for learning and discovery. And yet, there is a feistiness and spirit about young people in Pittsburgh that will not allow the adults in their educational spaces to render them invisible. This is why I choose to center my work on adults in educational spaces. While the youth are wonderful organizers and outstanding ambassadors, I don't think the burden of change should rest on their shoulders. I want them to have a childhood and be young adults.

Adults need to change. I believe that it is the adults in education who should be fighting for racial justice by having the courage to risk personal comfort and safety to improve the lives of students. I also believe that adults should systematically and intentionally interrogate themselves to continuously improve and understand personal biases, assumptions and prejudices.

It is my experience that, as a unit in schools, teachers and leaders rarely do that work here in Pittsburgh.

SG: In your essay "What's in a Myth?", you point out that "to inscribe means to draw (a figure) inside another figure...reinscribing the past pulls others into the process of historical reconstruction." Can you say a little about what reinscribing Pittsburgh history means for us today?

GG: At the time, I was thinking a lot about the stories we choose to tell and the ones we choose not to tell. My family stories are rich and abundant. These stories are often about hard work done on the farm and in school. Yet, it was not until I was in graduate school doing research on integration in North Carolina that I learned that my mother had integrated her high school. She never told me that story until I was telling her about my research!

The myth that I and so many other Black kids grew up with was the myth that segregated Black schools consisted solely of dilapidated school buildings, old books, and limited financial resources.
When I asked that question, "What's in a Myth?", over 20 years ago now, I was really asking, what if we told a different story?

What if we told the story about Black segregated schools that centered the leaders who lead, the teachers who taught, the coaches who mentored, the students who learned, the parents who supported it all?

Security culture is a form of etiquette, a way to avoid needless misunderstandings and potentially disastrous conflicts.

Security concerns should never be an excuse for making others feel left out or inferior—though it can take some finesse to avoid that!—just as no one should feel they have a "right" to be in on anything others prefer to keep to themselves. Those who violate the security culture of their communities should not be rebuked too harshly the first time—this isn't a question of being hip enough to activist decorum to join the in-group, but of establishing group expectations and gently helping people understand their importance; besides, people are least able to absorb constructive criticism when they're put on the defensive. Nevertheless, such people should always be told immediately how they're putting others at risk, and what the consequences will be should they continue to. Those who can't grasp this must be tactfully but effectively shut out of all sensitive situations.

Security culture is not paranoia institutionalized, but a way to avoid unhealthy paranoia by minimizing risks ahead of time.

It is counterproductive to spend more energy worrying about how much surveillance you are under than is useful for decreasing the danger it poses, just as it is debilitating to be constantly second-guessing your precautions and doubting the authenticity of potential comrades. A good security culture should make everyone feel more relaxed and confident, not less. At the same time, it's equally unproductive to accuse those who adhere to security measures stricter than yours of being paranoid—remember, our enemies are out to get us.

Don't let suspicion be used against you.

If your foes can't learn your secrets, they will settle for turning you against each other. Undercover agents can spread rumors or throw around accusations to create dissension, mistrust, and resentment inside of or between groups. They may falsify letters or take similar steps to frame activists. The mainstream media can participate in this by reporting that there is an informant in a group when there is not one, or misrepresenting the politics or history of an individual or group in order to alienate potential allies, or emphasizing over and over that there is a conflict between two branches of a movement until they really do mistrust one another. Again, a shrewd security culture that fosters an appropriately high level of trust and confidence should make such provocations nearly impossible on the personal level; when it comes to relations between proponents of different tactics and organizations of different stripes, remember the importance of solidarity and diversity of tactics, and trust that others do, too, even if media accounts suggest otherwise. Don't accept rumors or reports as fact: go to the source for confirmation every time, and be diplomatic about it.

Don't be intimidated by bluffing.

Police attention and surveillance is not necessarily an indication that they know anything specific about your plans or activities: often it indicates that they do not and are trying to frighten you out of continuing with them. Develop an instinct with which to sense when your cover has actually been blown and when your enemies are just trying to distress you into doing their work for them.

Always be prepared for the possibility that you are under observation, but don't mistake attracting surveillance for being effective.

Even if everything you are doing is perfectly legal, you may still receive attention and harassment from intelligence organizations if they feel you pose an inconvenience to their masters. In some regards, this can be for the best; the more they have to monitor, the more thinly spread their energies are, and the harder it is for them to pinpoint and neutralize subversives. At the same time, don't get caught up in the excitement of being under surveillance and begin to assume that the more the authorities pay attention to you, the more dangerous to them you must be—they're not that smart. They tend to be preoccupied with the resistance organizations whose approaches most resemble their own; take advantage of this. The best tactics are the ones that reach people, make points, and exert leverage while not showing up on the radar of the powers that be, at least not until it is too late. Ideally, your activities should be well known to everyone except the authorities.

Security culture involves a code of silence, but it is not a code of voicelessness.

The stories of our daring exploits in the struggle against capitalism must be told somehow, so everyone will know resistance is a real possibility put into action by real people; open incitements to insurrection must be made, so would-be revolutionaries can find each other and the revolutionary sentiments buried in the hearts of the masses find their way to the surface. A good security culture should preserve as much secrecy as is necessary for individuals to be safe in their underground activities, while still providing visibility for radical perspectives. Most of the security tradition in the activist milieu today is derived from the past thirty years of animal rights and earth liberation activities; as such, it's perfectly suited for the needs of small groups carrying out isolated illegal acts, but isn't always appropriate for more aboveground campaigns aimed at encouraging generalized insubordination. In some cases it can make sense to break the law openly, in order to provoke the participation of a large mass that can then provide safety in numbers.

An interview with
Pittsburgh Mutual Aid

SG: Tell us a little bit about what you do at Pittsburgh Mutual Aid--what tasks might you all do on a typical day?

PMA: On any given day, Pittsburgh Mutual Aid receives requests from the community through phone, email or our *Covaid.co* platform. This ranges from food, household items, rides, legal support, and literally anything. People can also post on our platform household items, skills, whatever they have and requestors can reach out to them directly or be linked by our rockstar volunteer resource-matching team. Twice a week, we collaborate with Ratzon Food Distro to deliver groceries and supplies to anyone who needs them. The Pittsburgh Mutual Aid Fund also doles out cash grants up to $250 to individuals.

SG: Why did Pittsburgh need a mutual aid movement? Why is the mutual aid movement so important in 2020?

PMA: Everywhere needs mutual aid because relying on our community to support one another is how we'll move into more just societies. People who are systemically left out of institutional charity-based programs, such as Black folks, indigenous folks, and other people of color, LGBTQ+, formerly incarcerated individuals, undocumented people, sex workers and others can't wait for an end to capitalism to start building the infrastructure for equitable transfer of goods.

Mutual aid is *not* charity or based on reciprocation. It is an informal community network of sharing through the recognition that we all have needs and ways to give. This allows us to provide for each other with dignity, familiarity and genuine love.

Specifically, in 2020 we came together with urgency at the beginning of the pandemic, but understood that a mutual aid network was long overdue. Our nation is crumbling and our traditional support systems are largely ineffective, inequitable and inaccessible to people who need them most. Only the people can create equitable alternatives--we need to get to know our neighbors, find out what their needs are and what resources they have to offer.

SG: Why do you think the mutual aid movement will continue to be important once COVID-19 is no longer a worry?

PMA: The current pandemic has served like a test, knowing that mutual aid will be an ever-present need, and it's been dope to see people with different skills and backgrounds work across local and international communities to build the network, infrastructure and share tips and celebrations! The community love is so strong and isn't going anywhere!

SG: The Pittsburgh Police absorbs almost one fifth of the municipal budget, more than many other departments combined. Can you say a bit about why the Defund the Police and mutual aid movements are compatible?

PMA: Mutual aid originates with tribal socialism as embodied by indigenous cultures worldwide. The "American" police force is a force of colonialism designed to enslave BIPOC and protect the settlers' property. As we decolonize and people begin to learn that they own nothing, they will give freely and receive without shame.

The police are one part of the larger spectrum of institutions designed to sustain racism and poverty. Mutual aid is a direct resistance to this capitalist structure.

We must learn to care for each other by providing for each other's needs and keeping each other safe. Defunding the police and building robust mutual aid must happen in tandem. Pittsburgh Mutual Aid volunteers are directly involved in the #BLM and Defund the Police movements and many volunteers have come forward to help us provide supplies for recent protests, from hand washing stations to protective gear.

SG: How can people help to create robust mutual aid in Pittsburgh?

PMA: Building mutual aid in Pittsburgh is essential to the transformative moment we are in and takes *all* of us. Specifically, you can help by telling us about your needs and/or signing up as a volunteer by going to PittsburghMutualAid.com, joining our team of volunteer organizers, following and sharing our FB (@pghmutualaid) and IG (@_pghmutualaid).

There is also a backlog of hundreds of people in desperate need of financial support! Contribute via Cash App ($PGHMUTUALAID), Venmo (pghmutualaid), or our GoFundMe page.

An interview with my lovely mentor, teacher,
and friend,
Dr. Gretchen Givens Generett

SG: Tell us a little bit about what you do, and the kinds of issues you tend to work on when it comes to the Pittsburgh area.

GG: My work always focuses on educational inequities and how to eradicate them. Whether that is in K-12 education, in higher education, or in community, I am always looking to disrupt the master narrative of meritocracy.

I am a professor and a department chair in the School of Education at Duquesne University. In the classroom, I prepare teachers, school leaders, and other educational leaders who find themselves working at colleges/universities

THE WORLD WE WANT IS THE WORLD WE NEED: THOUGHTS & CONVERSATIONS

So--where should the police's money go? What do we do with all this surplus time, money, and human labor?

Answering these questions requires ongoing research and collaboration. It requires constant public discourse about the future of the community. It requires a deliberately intersectional and interdisciplinary approach to ending oppressive hierarchies. It requires people willing to employ dynamic and complex solutions to meet people's short- and long-term needs. In other words, it requires strong community organizing.

In a deeply realized democracy, social wants are social needs--the world is the people's oyster. America is not a deeply realized democracy. Policing is just the spearhead of American capitalism's vast and brutal clockwork, which has a deeply chilling effect on fundamental democratic freedoms.

Since the Reagan era, neoliberal capitalism has argued that our society works best when it is run by the "free market" rather than the government. We see the utter failure of this system in a situation like the coronavirus pandemic. It is July 2020, months into the crisis, and millions of Americans are sick, broke, and hungry. And the government is doing absolutely nothing. The idea, as always, is that "the private sector will take care of it."

America's obsession with a "free market" has ultimately led to the greatest wealth gap in world history. It has led to the largest prison population in world history. It has led to manufactured austerity: the constant defunding of social services combined with the constant hyperfunding of police and military. It has led to the control of our entire society by a tiny group of plutocrats. We can no longer pretend that the American experiment has succeded. We can no longer hope that capitalism is the end of history. We can no longer accept a power structure that does not systematically secure human rights for all.[1]

Pittsburghers are freedom fighters, and their/our dedication to liberation and mutual aid long precedes the current moment. Not only have the city's residents (especially its Black femmes) long been organizing against police and the prison-industrial complex; they have also long been organizing for employment; community safety and accountability; clean water and air; access to food; education; and reproductive justice, among so many other things. They have shown us that making our future in the

present is possible.

The Pittsburgh Police received a budget boost of $10.2 million *in the last fiscal year alone.*[2]

Instead of three new police stations, this bonus could have paid for three or more new reproductive health clinics.

It could have been reinvested in a community-based public health approach to ending gun violence, as recommended by the CDC.[3]

It could have been set aside to give grocery grants of $250 each to over 40,800 working families when they need it the most.

It could have gone toward establishing a robust restorative justice infrastructure to replace traditional punishment in Pittsburgh courts and schools.

On average, it could have paid for over 500 years of tuition at Pitt--or over 2,000 years at CCAC.

It could have expanded walkability and accessibility, and improved our public transit corridors.

It could have been used to implement a Housing First model (which has been proven effective at ending chronic homelessness) here in Pittsburgh.

It could have established harm prevention strategies like clean needle exchanges and robust rehab programs.

It could have built schools, preschools, playgrounds, daycares, after-school centers.

It could have gone towards fixing our water system, which has been utterly ruined since 2012 by the international utilities company Veolia--the very same company responsible for Flint, Michigan's clean water crisis.

It could have planted trees in neighborhoods where air pollution is the worst, or funded a municipal zero-waste program.

It could have...

City Council decides our budget in September of each year. Go to defund12.org/pittsburgh to immediately email all City Council members. Come into the streets with your body if you can. Fight. Not only for the many thousand gone, but also for the many thousand yet to be born.

1   See Pogge, Thomas Winfried Menko. *World Poverty and Human Rights.* Polity, 2010.

2   City of Pittsburgh. "2020 Operating Budget"
3   Byrdsong et. al., "A Ground-Up Model"

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Balance the need to escape detection by your enemies against the need to be accessible to potential friends.

In the long run, secrecy alone cannot protect us—sooner or later they are going to find all of us, and if no one else understands what we're doing and what we want, they'll be able to liquidate us with impunity. Only the power of an informed and sympathetic (and hopefully similarly equipped) public can help us then. There should always be entryways into communities in which direct action is practiced, so more and more people can join in. Those doing really serious stuff should keep it to themselves, of course, but every community should also have a person or two who vocally advocates and educates about direct action, and who can discreetly help trustworthy novices link up with others getting started.

When you're planning an action, begin by establishing the security level appropriate to it, and act accordingly from there on.

Learning to gauge the risks posed by an activity or situation and how to deal with them appropriately is not just a crucial part of staying out of jail; it also helps to know what you're not worried about, so you don't waste energy on unwarranted, cumbersome security measures. Keep in mind that a given action may have different aspects that demand different degrees of security; make sure to keep these distinct. Here's an example of a possible rating system for security levels:

1. Only those who are directly involved in the action know of its existence.

2. Trusted support persons also know about the action, but everyone in the group decides together who these will be.

3. It is acceptable for the group to invite people to participate who might choose not to—that is, some outside the group may know about the action, but are still expected to keep it a secret.

4. The group does not set a strict list of who is invited; participants are free to invite others and encourage them to do the same, while emphasizing that knowledge of the action is to be kept within the circles of those who can be trusted with secrets.

5. "Rumors" of the action can be spread far and wide through the community, but the identities of those at the center of the organizing are to be kept a secret.

6. The action is announced openly, but with at least some degree of discretion, so as not to tip off the sleepier of the authorities.

7. The action is totally announced and aboveground in all ways.

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To give examples, security level #1 would be appropriate for a group planning to firebomb an SUV dealership, while level #2 would be acceptable for those planning more minor acts of property destruction, such as spraypainting. Level #3 or #4 would be appropriate for calling a spokescouncil preceding a black bloc at a large demonstration or for a group planning to do a newspaper wrap, depending on the ratio of risk versus need for numbers. Level #5 would be perfect for a project such as initiating a surprise unpermitted march: for example, everyone hears in advance that the Ani DiFranco performance is going to end in a "spontaneous" antiwar march, so people can prepare accordingly, but as no one knows whose idea it is, no one can be targeted as an organizer. Level #6 would be appropriate for announcing a Critical Mass bicycle ride: fliers are wrapped around the handlebars of every civilian bicycle, but no announcements are sent to the papers, so the cops won't be there at the beginning while the mass is still vulnerable. Level #7 is appropriate for a permitted antiwar march or independent media video screening, unless you're so dysfunctionally paranoid you even want to keep community outreach projects a secret.

It also makes sense to choose the means of communication you will use according to the level of security demanded. Here's an example of different levels of communications security, corresponding to the system just outlined above:

1. No communication about the action except in person, outside the homes of those involved, in surveillance-free environments (e.g. the group goes camping to discuss plans); no discussion of the action except when it is absolutely necessary.

2. Outside group meetings, involved individuals are free to discuss the action in surveillance-free spaces.

3. Discussions are permitted in homes not definitely under surveillance.

4. Communication by encrypted email or on neutral telephone lines is acceptable.

5. People can speak about the action over telephones, email, etc. provided they're careful not to give away certain details—who, what, when, where.

6. Telephones, email, etc. are all fair game; email listservs, fliering in public spaces, announcements to newspapers, etc. may or may not be acceptable, on a case-by-case basis.

7. Communication and proclamation by every possible medium are encouraged.

If you keep hazardous information out of circulation and you follow suitable security measures in every project you undertake, you'll be well on your way to fulfilling what early CrimethInc. agent Abbie Hoffman described as the first duty of the revolutionary: not getting caught. All the best in your adventures and misadventures, and remember—you didn't hear it from us!

as school policing
- Immigration detention and deportation
- Disproportionately unsolved murders
- Unemployment and underemployment
- Residential segregation, displacement, and gentrification
- Educational disparities
- Medical neglect and malpractice
- Environmental injustices, including lack of access to clean water and air
- Hunger and food desertion

Pittsburgh is known today as having safely overcome a near-disastrous environmental past, emerging triumphant from the rubble of deindustrialization with a thriving new "Eds and Meds" economy to boot. Pittsburgh loves to tell this story about itself.

But the problem is that this story deliberately erases the experience of the city's Black residents. It is true that Pittsburgh provides some of the best quality of life among peer cities--for White people. For Black people, in fact, Pittsburgh is an especially precarious and unsafe place to live. This "tale of two cities" is not uncommon in cities like Pittsburgh--cities left scarred by the redlining of the New Deal era, that are still today separate and unequal as a matter of fact. An important 2019 report from Pittsburgh's Gender Equity Commission found that, when compared to similar cities, rates of livability for white men and women were quite high in Pittsburgh--but for Black men and especially Black women, they are shockingly low.[17] Here are just a few of the findings:

- Pittsburgh's Black maternal mortality rate is higher than those in 97% of similar cities
- Black children in Pittsburgh are up to 3x more likely to die under 18 than white children
- Pittsburgh has more Black children growing up in poverty than 95% of similar cities
- Black students in Pittsburgh are less likely to pass AP exams, less likely to be selected for middle school algebra, and less likely to be selected for Gifted and Talented programs--but more likely to get held back, suspended, referred to police, and arrested in school than white students
- Young Black men in Pittsburgh are 13x more likely to die between ages 18 and 24 than their white counterparts--and 42x more likely to die by being murdered
- 27% of Pittsburgh's Black men and almost 40% of Pittsburgh's Black women live below the poverty line (compared to just 8% percent of white men)
- Jobs that pay less than $30,000 a year (e.g. health care support workers, servers, and custodians,

what we now call "essential jobs") are disproportionately filled by Pittsburgh's Black population
- Pittsburgh has more Black women out of the labor force than 97% of American cities
- Pittsburgh's Black adult women are 5x more likely to live in poverty than white adult men
- Pittsburgh's Black adults are more likely to die of heart disease and cancer than whites
- The mortality rate for Black adults is higher in Pittsburgh than in 98% of similar cities

We are not the most livable city. We are the most lethal city. All of these various systemic violences layer together to rob Black Pittsburghers of life and freedom. The deadliness of this city is stressful and traumatizing in itself. So when we talk about "crime," we need to have a holistic picture of all these systems. We should perhaps think about *social harm* and *social justice* rather than crime and punishment.[18]

"Crime" is never politically neutral as a category--it always carries certain value-laden judgments of who and what should be considered "criminal." Considering *harm*, on the other hand, recenters us on consciously addressing all of the forces that are tangibly damaging people and our planet every day--not just the actions that the state deems "criminal." Addressing harm means following destructive forces to their very roots, and healing from there outward.

The Defund movement could just as easily be called the "Divest/Invest" movement, or the "Redistribute" movement (but obviously, "Defund" is more punchy.) What Defund supporters are asking for is not simply a unilateral slashing of police--but rather, the dismantling of police via the transferral of their resources and functions to community institutions that are life-affirming and socially supportive. The Defund movement is transformative justice in action.

Washington, D.C., 2020 (from CNN)

17   Howell, Junia, Sara Goodkind, Leah Jacobs, Dominique Branson and Elizabeth Miller. "Pittsburgh's Inequality across Gender and Race." *Gender Analysis White Papers*. City of Pittsburgh's Gender Equity Commission, 2019.

18   As, for example, in Cain, Maureen, and Adrian Howe, editors. *Women, Crime and Social Harm: towards a Criminology for the Global Age.* Bloomsbury, 2008.

cially in the Midwest and Northeast.[5] Of the 1,944 police killings documented by Mapping Police Violence from 2013-2019, only 3% resulted in charges being brought against police. And fewer than 1% of cases ever reached conviction.[6] As Brookings Institute researchers Andre Perry, David Harshbarger, Carl Romer, and Kristian Thymianos argued recently,

"The failure to prosecute murderous police *typifies a bad overall track record with solving violent crimes:* approximately 38% of murders, 66% of rapes, 70% of robberies, and 47% of aggravated assaults go uncleared every year."[7]

For Black Pittsburgh, these numbers are largely even worse. Black people consistently make up the overwhelming majority of murder victims in the Pittsburgh metro area, despite making up only a quarter of the city's population. In 2012, for example, 100% of Pittsburgh murder victims under 18 were Black.[8] From 2010 to 2015, 85% of all murder victims in Pittsburgh were Black.[9] Pennsylvania's Black homicide rate is almost seven times the national overall average.[10] But these victims and their families rarely receive legal justice, let alone deep healing--97% of unsolved murders in Allegheny County are of Black victims.[11] When studying gun violence in Pittsburgh, researchers T. Rashad Byrdsong, Angela Devan, and Hide Yamatani concluded that "over-reliance on law enforcement to control violence invites further affliction among Black youth and adults."[12]

The last few decades have demonstrated that increased numbers of police do not have any reliable effect on preventing crime, let alone on the rate at which violent crimes are investigated or solved. Over and over again, experts have told us that the quantity of police has no effect on the quality of policing.[13] In

fact, when the NYPD went on a work slowdown in the midst of a political fight over the Eric Garner uprising in 2014-15, the city's crime rates dropped significantly.[14]

Tax dollars are the primary source of funding for the police's ever-widening budget. Our city budget is supposed to be a reflection of our values. Do we really want to see Pittsburgh spiral further down the path of carceral capitalism--inflating police and prisons while doing nothing to heal unemployment, houselessness, underfunded schools, hunger, and illness?

It's not that communities don't face serious problems--but the simple fact is that stuffing more money into police coffers does not make us safer. An analysis by the *Washington Post* using 60 years of national data found that increases in police funding did not correlate in any significant way with decreases in crime.[15]

Police's countless murders of Black people, combined with their utter inability to solve crimes that already happened
--let alone to prevent future crimes--mean that the police have a net negative effect on our society. For Black America, this is no news flash.

Consistently, the sociological literature tells us that the single most effective way to reduce crime is to improve social programs--namely, education and employment.[16] Black, brown, and working class Pittsburghers have been systematically denied human rights, through multiple types of violence, including but not limited to:

- Police terrorism and malfeasance
- Mass incarceration and carceral pipelines such

5   Marshall, Michael. "US Police Kill up to 6 Times More Black People than White People." *New Scientist*, 24 June 2020, www.newscientist.com/article/2246987-us-police-kill-up-to-6-times-more-black-people-than-white-people/.
6   Bult, Laura. "A Timeline of 1,944 Black Americans Killed by Police." *Vox*, 30 June 2020, www.vox.com/2020/6/30/21306843/black-police-killings.
7   Perry, Andre M., et al. "To Add Value to Black Communities, We Must Defund the Police and Prison Systems." *Brookings*, 11 June 2020, www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/06/11/to-add-value-to-black-communities-we-must-defund-the-police-and-prison-systems/. --My emphasis.
8   "Pittsburgh's Racial Demographics 2015: Differences and Disparities." Center on Race & Social Problems, University of Pittsburgh, 2015, http://www.crsp.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/REPORT.pdf.
9   Benzing, Jeffrey. "Pittsburgh's Repeating Tragedy of Unsolved Black Homicides." *PublicSource*, 21 Feb. 2018, www.publicsource.org/pittsburghs-repeating-tragedy-of-unsolved-black-homicides/.
10   Byrdsong, T. Rashad, Angela Devan & Hide Yamatani. "A Ground-Up Model for Gun Violence Reduction: A Community-Based Public Health Approach," *Journal of Evidence Informed Social Work*, 13:1, 76-86, 2016, DOI: 10.1080/15433714.2014.997090.
11   Benzing, "Pittsburgh."
12   Byrdsong et. al., "A Ground-Up Model."
13   See, for example, Weichselbaum, Simone, and Wendi C. Thomas. "More Cops. Is It the Answer to Fighting Crime?" *USA Today*, 13 Feb. 2019, www.usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2019/02/13/

marshall-project-more-cops-dont-mean-less-crime-experts-say/2818056002/.; Kleck, Gary, and J. C. Barnes. "Do More Police Lead to More Crime Deterrence?" Crime & Delinquency 60, no. 5 (August 2014): 716–38. doi:10.1177/0011128710382263; and Sampson, Robert J., et al. "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy." *Science*, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 15 Aug. 1997, science.sciencemag.org/content/277/5328/918.
14   Sullivan, Christopher M., and Zachary P. O'Keeffe. "Evidence That Curtailing Proactive Policing Can Reduce Major Crime." *Nature*, 25 Sep. 2017, www.nature.com/articles/s41562-017-0211-5.
15   Bump, Philip. "Over the Past 60 Years, More Spending on Police Hasn't Necessarily Meant Less Crime." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 7 June 2020, www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/06/07/over-past-60-years-more-spending-police-hasnt-necessarily-meant-less-crime/.
16   See, for example, Danley, Stephen. "Camden Police Reboot Is Being Misused in the Debate over Police Reform." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 16 June 2020, www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/06/16/camden-nj-police-reboot-is-being-misused-debate-over-police-reform/; Lochner, Lance, and Enrico Moretti. "The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self-Reports." *The American Economic Review*, Mar. 2004, https://eml.berkeley.edu/~moretti/lm46.pdf; and Uggen, Christopher, and Sarah K.S. Shannon. "Productive Addicts and Harm Reduction: How Work Reduces Crime–But Not Drug Use." *Social Problems*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2014, pp. 105–130., doi:10.1525/sp.2013.11225.

ABOLITION

Hello
my name is

PIC

the PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

Prison Industrial Complex (PIC)

PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX (PIC) IS A TERM
WE USE TO DESCRIBE THE OVERLAPPING INTERESTS
OF GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY THAT USE
SURVEILLANCE, POLICING, AND IMPRISONMENT
AS SOLUTIONS TO ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND
POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

Through its reach and impact, the PIC helps and maintains the authority of people who get their power through racial, economic and similar privileges. There are many ways this power is collected and maintained through the PIC, including creating mass media images that keep alive stereotypes of people of color, poor people, queer people, immigrants, youth, etc. as criminal, delinquent or deviant. This power is also maintained by earning huge profits for private companies that deal with prisons and police forces; helping earn political gains for "tough on crime" politicians; increasing the influence of prison guard and police unions; and eliminating social and political dissent by people of color, poor people, immigrants, and others who make demands of self-determination and reorganization of power in the US.

All these things are parts of the PIC.

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do we need to build Pittsburgh's future from the present? I won't pretend to fully answer these questions--but I would like to open them up further.

The popular "Lend Me Your Ears" mural in East Liberty, before it was painted over by real estate developers in 2015

A line of police in riot gear, flanked by armored County Police and SWAT trucks, terrorize protestors in East Liberty, as recorded by the *Pittsburgh City Paper*, 1 June 2020

Pittsburghers take to the street after Antwon Rose II's shooting (from *TribLive*)

REFRAMING HARM

Since Peduto was inaugurated in 2014, the police's budget has ballooned by over $42 million, bringing the PBP to a 2020 grand total of $114,787,000.[1] That's almost 19% of our city's budget. For comparison, Human Resources and Civil Service, which got slashed by over $14 million in 2020, takes just around 7%. Environmental Services takes only 3%. Parks and Recreation, just 0.78%. The Citizen Police Review Board, a measly 0.1%.

Who--or what--is the City so afraid of? When it comes to the impact of policing on our communities, the data speaks for itself. We've been socialized to think of police as a superheroic profession. Our cultural notion of cops as action figures has served to shore up police's legitimacy even as they become more and more illegitimate.

The Pew Research Center has noted that despite Donald Trump's repetitive, fearmongering promises to be America's "law and order President," violent crime is less of an issue now than it ever has been in America. Both violent and property crimes have been steadily decreasing for two decades. Despite the drop in crimes actually being committed, however, Americans still tend to believe crime is increasing nationally. And police departments' budgets continue to expand endlessly, largely unquestioned by the public--until now.[2]

Nine out of ten times police are called to action, it is to respond to a nonviolent situation (i.e., where no person is being harmed). And over ninety-five percent of arrests made by police each year are for nonviolent offenses.[3]

Most violent crimes in America go unreported to police. This is not surprising when you consider police's ineffectiveness in actually solving crime. Less than half of all crimes that get reported to the police actually get solved. Only 46 percent of violent crimes ever result in arrest. An even smaller fraction of cases are actually prosecuted.[4]

Furthermore, Black Americans are up to six times more likely to be killed by police than others--espe-

1   City of Pittsburgh. "2020 Operating Budget & Five-Year Plan," 2019, https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/8055_Operating_Budget_as_approved__by_Council_12-17-19(5).pdf and City of Pittsburgh, "2014 Budget," https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/cbo/2014_Operating_Budget.pdf.
2   Gramlich, John. "5 Facts about Crime in the U.S." Pew Research Center, 30 May 2020, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/17/facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/.
3   "Persons Arrested." *Uniform Crime Reporting*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 21 Aug. 2018, ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2017/crime-in-the-u.s-2017/topic-pages/persons-arrested.
4   Ibid.

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PART II.

TOWARD A PITTSBURGH WITHOUT POLICE

Here we are today. We have hewn a big, sprawling web of human settlements out of the "land in the fork"--Pittsburgh. Yet we have still so egregiously failed to pay justice to that land. We still exploit our environment and violate the humans that inhabit it.

Bogus efforts at police reform have been implemented in municipalities like Pittsburgh for years now--body cameras, training sessions, town halls, hiring more officers of color. We have no evidence that any of these efforts have affected police use of force or the disproportionate criminalization of Black people. With these reforms, the unruly expansiveness of the American police state, which subjects Black people to its ruinous projects, is not challenged, blocked, or diminished. Quite the opposite, these reform efforts hand more money and legitimacy over to police.

In other words, the issue is not that police are not "advanced" enough to serve our communities. The issue, rather, is that police are too advanced, too large, too militarized, too aggressive, too repressive, too murderous. The Defund movement says no to all of this excess.

Bourgeois and/or white folks often misunderstand the work that "reparations" really do. Reparations are not about saying sorry for slavery. They are not simply about atonement or magnanimously making up for a past wrong. What "reparations" refers to, rather, is a dynamic political and economic effort to systematically reverse the long-term effects of enslavement and white supremacy that continue to differentially expose the Black diaspora to precarity and premature death.[1]

Police violence is perhaps the most spectacular form of anti-Blackness in America, but it is only one part of the all-encompassing legacy of slavery, the institution

John E. Drabinski has called one of America's "founding wounds."[2] A twenty-first century abolitionist movement is an absolutely indispensable part of reparations, not only because America's police and prisons have expanded exponentially over the last forty years, to the detriment of Black people, but also because America's education, arts, healthcare, public housing, welfare, and other social programs have all been slashed by huge scores since the rise of neoliberalism--again, to the disproportionate detriment of Black people.[3]

Some folks are very fearful about the idea of defunding. Frightened, they wonder who will save them in a dangerous situation (even if they have only a vague notion of what this "dangerous situation" would even be.) Fox News pundits warn defunding the police will turn our cities into "war zones." But they don't ever criticize their own notions of who the enemy is, who the Other is. The state declared its wars on Black bodies a long time ago. Wealthy and/or white notions of "peace" and "safety" are rooted in the making-invisible, the making-unsafe of Black and poor people through geographies of incarceration and apartheid. As Ruth Gilmore put it in a 2018 lecture,

"Those who feel, in their gut, deep anxiety that abolition means we knock it all down, do scorched-earth, and then start something new--let that go. That's not what it is. It's building the future from the present in all of the ways we can."[4]

So what does this transformation look like? What

1   Darity, William A., and A. Kirsten Mullen. *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century.* The University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

2   Drabinski, John E. "Reconciliation and Founding Wounds." *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 4, no. 1 (2013): 117-132. doi:10.1353/hum.2013.0010.
3   This pattern is documented thoroughly in Center for Popular Democracy, et al. "FREEDOM TO THRIVE: REIMAGINING SAFETY & SECURITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES," populardemocracy.org/sites/default/files/Freedom%20To%20Thrive%2C%20Higher%20Res%20Version.pdf.
4   Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. "Normalizing the In/Security State: Police and Prisons." YouTube. www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjz_FQBTP-mY.

ABOLITION

PIC ABOLITION IS A POLITICAL VISION WITH THE GOAL OF ELIMINATING PRISONS, POLICING, AND SURVEILLANCE AND CREATING LASTING ALTERNATIVES TO PUNISHMENT AND IMPRISONMENT.

From where we are now, sometimes we can't really imagine what abolition is going to look like. Abolition isn't just about getting rid of buildings full of cages. It's also about undoing the society we live in because the PIC both feeds on and maintains oppression and inequalities through punishment, violence, and controls millions of people. Because the prison industrial complex is not an isolated system, abolition is a broad strategy. An abolitionist vision means that we must build models today that can represent how we want to live in the future. It means developing practical strategies for taking small steps that move us toward making our dreams real and that lead us all to believe that things really could be different. It means living this vision in our daily lives.

Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal.

SELF-DETERMINATION

SELF-DETERMINATION IS THE IDEA THAT COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE ABLE TO DETERMINE THEIR OWN DEALINGS WITHOUT BEING CONTROLLED OR RESTRAINED BY OUTSIDE OR GOVERNMENT FORCES. Community affairs could include economic practices, systems for dealing with harm, housing and education values and policies, political structures, geographical boundaries, and relations with other communities.

To exercise self-determination means that members of a community are accountable to each other, and, most probably, that they have a way to make sure power is shared fairly. Self -determination as a principle was made popular through the struggles of oppressed people, primarily people of color in the US and internationally, for control of resources, power, and land.

Abolitionist efforts to bring an end to the PIC mean supporting oppressed peoples' rights to self-determination by seeking to abolish those racist institutions of domination (prisons, police, state/government armed forced, the CIA and FBI). They also mean bringing our desires, efforts and resources to those communities who are directly affected by the PIC's most aggressive and punishing institutions.

Many fighters for self-determination see imprisoning entire families as a form of genocide. They also see the media-assisted criminalization of both youth and resistance as low-intensity warfare by the government. This warfare is aimed at preventing the rise of liberation and movements for self-determination that can shake the very foundations of the U.S. from within. They see the police as domestic armies. They see the drug war as a plan to paint people of color as dangerous people who have nothing to contribute to society and, therefore, must be removed.

The PIC deliberately and fanatically prevents self-determination. Currently, most communities - especially poor communities and communities of color - don't have a say in how their resources are spent or how resources are spent on them. A concern for self-determination is one way of expressing the political desire to stop the attacks by parts of the PIC - cops, sentencing, environmentally destructive industries, economic exploitation, war-making.

Self-determination is also a guiding principle for abolition. While there might not be a detailed program for how society will work without prisons, police, or detention, the ideal of self-determination gives us a guide for how decisions could be made and for how to begin that work now.

(see also *Liberation Movements and the PIC* in the appendix)

KEYWORDS

MAKING FREEDOM

ABOLITION   GEOGRAPHY   &   THE
MOVEMENT TO DEFUND PITTSBURGH POLICE

NEW   YORK   UNIVERSITY   /   PROF.   DANIEL   JOSLYN
HISTORY   OF   AMERICAN   RADICALISM   /   JUNE   2020

SUHAIL   GHARAIBEH
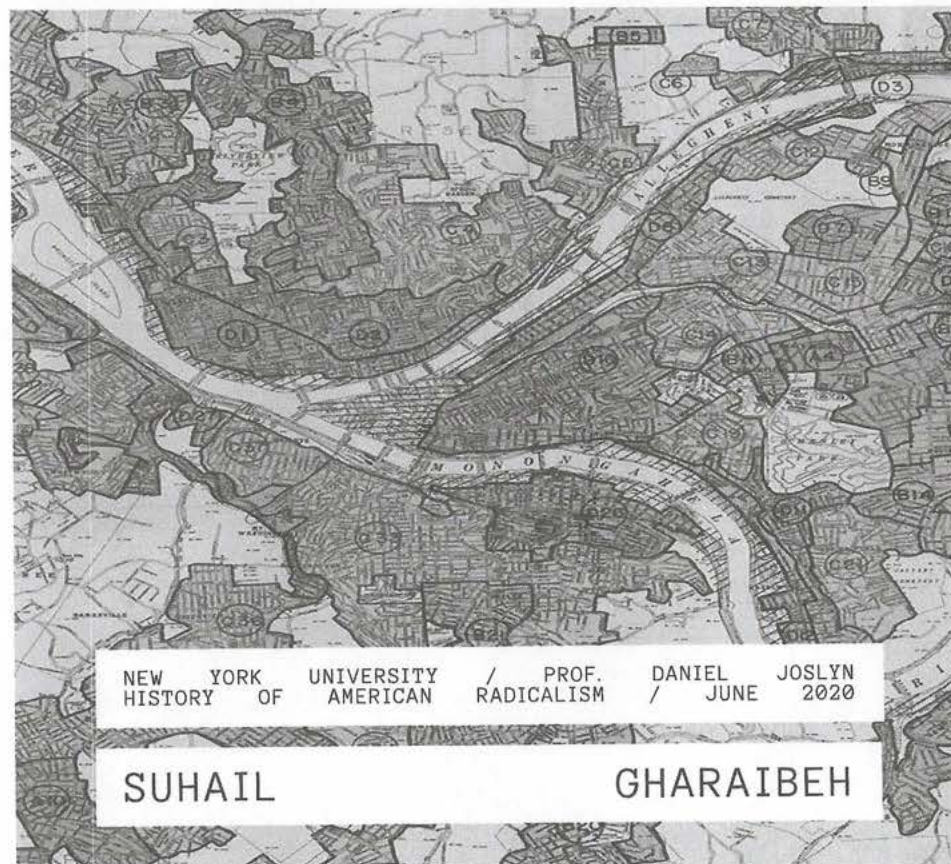
7. Failure to Build Capacity: How are we building our communities' capacity for community-based, transformative approaches to harm, need and conflict? Are we actually creating the muscles needed for real safety to take root and grow? If we focus only on critique, we will miss the work of sustainable capacity building that real safety requires. This is like stopping on the journey when we are really just getting started.

8. Leaving Survivors Behind: How are victim-rights/survivor-focused groups going to react to the proposals to defund law enforcement? Many of these groups rely on those funding streams to exist. We must build bridges that help them join our movement, so they too can be on the road to real safety, which is what so many of them desire most.

9. Budget Jargon: Community members are not *budget experts* and might find themselves feeling uninformed when leaders start discussing line items and revenue sources. But if we delegate these fights to policy folks, then the power and vision of organizing leaves the discussion. We must work with community members to understand the brass tacks, so that even when the road to real safety narrows, everyone has the confidence they need to stay on the journey.

10. Straight up Sabotage: The road to real safety is not itself safe. Undermining from the police, from the right wing and from liberal politicians is a real threat. We must anticipate it. The more we strengthen our relationships, spell out our shared values and guidelines for treating each other, and protect our common vision, then the less likely it is that we will get knocked off the road or, worse yet, provoked into pushing one another off course.

Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice is a set of ideas and a set of practices. Restorative justice defines crime as harm that is done both at the individual and the community level.

With that in mind, the goal of restorative justice programs and practices is to repair and prevent harm by addressing the needs of all involved in an incident. It focuses on the accused, the accuser or survivor and the communities in which they live, work, or learn (see Alternative Practices section for specific examples).

In the United States, experiments with restorative justice have been mixed. Since many restorative justice practices have their roots in native traditions, their use has not always taken into account cultural features that might not translate well into mainstream US culture. However, restorative justice ideas and strategies can be very helpful in thinking about alternative ways of addressing harm and providing frameworks for programs that are not linked to the state's punishment system.

WORDS ALONE CAN'T SAVE US. But our language does shape what we can imagine, and by using new words and old words differently, we can imagine new things. A major reason the PIC grows is that we are told there isn't another option. We need to use language creatively to help us develop strong, specific challenges to the PIC.

The way people talk about policing, prisons, safety, and crime shapes what we think these things are, and forms the ways we imagine change can or should happen. Words are not neutral, and it's important that we break down and reshape their meanings in our own materials and conversations. We can use language to shift debates, make people see things differently, and challenge our own assumptions and fears. Below are discussions and specific examples of how our word choice can not only help us make stronger abolitionist arguments, but figure out what abolition can look like.

INNOCENT	PRISONER	GUILTY	INMATE
VIOLENT	VICTIM	NON-VIOLENT	JUSTICE
CRIMINAL	SAFETY	CONVICT	PUNISHMENT

These words get used all the time when people talk about prisons, police, courts, and public safety. People who support the PIC use them as often as people who are fighting the PIC. They are filled with guesses about the people and ideas they describe. Often, these same guesses make the PIC seem logical and necessary. They re-define people and actions in terms of the categories the word represents. In this way a person becomes a criminal, and the act of the state putting someone in a cage becomes justice. These categories keep up people's fear for their safety, their understanding of what they need to be safe, and their reliance on and acceptance of police and prisons.

Most of these words work in pairs: when we use one, we are really using both. Innocent and guilty are a pair like this. The idea that you are either innocent or guilty is a natural assumption and it's what immediately comes to mind for most people. So saying that innocent people shouldn't be in prison (which most of us can agree is true), also says that guilty people should be. It suggests that most people who are locked up deserve to be there because they "did something." If we want to say that people are being picked up, harassed, or held without charges; there are ways to say it without suggesting that people in other circumstances are worse, or have done bad things, or deserve to be in cages.

It's important to pay close attention to the words we use to describe people in cages. Most often they are called "inmates," "criminals," and "prisoners." What are the differences?

INMATE. Originally, this term meant someone who shared a house with others. Currently, it mostly refers to people in prisons and mental institutions.

CRIMINAL. This term doesn't just mean someone convicted of a crime, or even someone who harms others. It implies that causing harm is essentially a part of this person, maybe even the most meaningful part of their personality.

PRISONER. This is someone kept in a cage against their will by some powerful force (like the state), whether that power is just or not.

These words also have race and gender meanings. For example, criminal and Black are often code words for each other. There is lots of pressure from white supremacy in media, or in policing, (or both, as in the TV show Cops and even local news) to make an automatic connection between these terms, by assuming a "criminal" is going to be a Black person, and in assuming that a Black person is going to be

4. Contract Traps: Often law enforcement association contracts create obstacles to cutting police budgets - so we need to develop strategies that directly target contract negotiations and provisions. We also need strategies that target parts of the police budget that are not hamstrung by contract provisions. Without these deeper layers of work, lawyers and conservative budget managers can use technicalities to block our way forward.

5. Lack of Imagination: This pitfall is solely on us. We must be crystal clear: What kinds of investments do we want in our communities? How are we identifying the programs we want officials to invest in instead of policing? The easiest thing to do is to move money from one city, county, or state program to another - but do these programs meet our community needs? When the road gets foggy and we need to sharpen our vision of the steps ahead, we must ask:

- Do we want money to move from police to public housing (which is often heavily policed - by law enforcement AND by public housing authorities) or to community-based quality, affordable, and long-term housing without long waiting lists?
- Do we want money to move from police to hospitals and mental health providers who incarcerate disabled people or to community-based, voluntary harm-reduction focused community mental health providers?
- Are community-based violence interruption programs, drug treatment, or youth engagement programs tied to police or prosecutors who serve as a "stick" to gain compliance, or are they rooted in deepening relationships and resources in our communities?
- Do our community based organizations have the capacity to meet community needs? To apply for and receive city or county funding? What can we be doing to increase our capacity and get rid of red tape and burdensome requirements for government funding? How can we ensure that it is not used as a tool to infuse surveillance and policing into our community organizing work?

6. Absence of Firewalls: Keeping our sights clear is paramount. But we also have to strengthen the road itself. It is vital to EXPLICITLY decouple social programs from policing. We need firewalls. For example, youth programming should not be tied to policing. Ever. Wherever we can build these boundaries, we must. Or else the road to real safety will become more worn down and harder to follow, rather than easier to travel over time.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS
ON THE ROAD TO REAL SAFETY

10 TIPS FOR NAVIGATING THE PUSHBACKS, THREATS AND CHALLENGES TO DEFUNDING POLICE

There are many pitfalls on the path to a new world, each of which could take our pursuit of real safety wildly off course, or end the journey altogether for the time being. The following list names 10 of these pitfalls and offers initial guidance for how to stay on course. Advancing a #DefundPolice strategy requires us to watch out for:

1. Watered Down Translations: "Defunding" is a broad term that can be and is being watered down. When the definition is weakened, it is likely to result in the state offering only gradual cuts over many years, an outcome that makes the road ahead much steeper. If watered down translations prevail, communities will be fighting to preserve these gradual and potentially too small cuts for months and years to come.

2. The Shell Game: Defunding is not just a numbers game of shifting money from the police budget to "community-police partnerships" or to programs that perpetuate policing like the foster system or coercive mental health or drug treatment programs. Our goal is to delegitimize policing institutions and policing practices, not simply move money from one to another. The Shell Game has the potential to confuse our goals and throw us off course.

3. Federal Entrenchment: Often funding for police departments comes from the federal government through grants for law enforcement that can't be moved to other purposes. However, sometimes these dollars are flexible, and we should strongly advocate that they be made available to be used for community programs that actually promote public safety. We can't let the 'federal dollars' narrative keep us from advancing our vision and fighting for reinvestment, from every available source. There are more resources for the journey to real safety than many realize.

a "criminal." There are particular ways terms like these have gender meanings, too. "Welfare queen," is one term that could be thought of as a femininely gendered word for "criminal." It works to make Black women and "criminals" interchangeable. This combination of gender and race meanings applies to men, too. "Gang member" and "sexual predator" are two examples of words that work to make Black men and "criminals" the same thing.

Prisoner is different from inmate and criminal, because it describes people who have been put in cages. It helps us remember that people aren't locked up for their own good or even just as a place to stay (which inmate implies), or that they are can't be separated from the harm they might/might not have caused (which is implied by criminal). The word prisoner helps us see the state as actively choosing to put people in cages, while inmate and (especially) criminal suggest that imprisonment is the only or even the best way to handle certain people. In this way the word prisoner also gets away from the harmful gender and racial dynamics of a word like criminal, which helps to disrupt the links to the PIC's white supremacy and sexism.

WHAT ARE THE WORDS YOU USE AND HEAR TO DESCRIBE PEOPLE IN CAGES? WHAT MEANINGS DO THEY HAVE?

Language works not only to define types of people in relation to the PIC, but types of actions, too. People fighting prison expansion or working to end the drug war often focus on taking advantage of public feelings about violent vs. non-violent crimes, or concerns about locking up too many drug users and not enough drug dealers. For example, you might see:

The drug laws drive prison expansion, fill prisons with non-violent, minor offenders, and drain resources from other services, such as drug treatment and education.

OR

Non-violent drug offenders are spending more time in prison than murderers and rapists.

EXERCISE

Go over these questions about the statements above, and use them to help you write an abolitionist re-working of those ideas:

1. What differences are being made between "violent" and "non-violent" offenders here?

2. What is suggested about the use of prisons generally?

3. How could you re-phrase this information to be in line with the ideas that no one should be in a cage, and that putting people in cages helps no one?

We can use language and ideas to transform how people think about what makes them safe. We can challenge the ways people are told to think about what makes their communities safe. And we can create materials that make clear a vision of community safety that does not depend on controlling, caging, or removing people. We need to be able to decide and create safety for ourselves, without leaving anyone behind. When we make materials, we need to recognize how we can best use language to make our ideas clear and common sense. We must be able to do this without falling into the trap of tough on crime language that weakens the long-term goal of abolition.

WORDS MATTER: LANGUAGE AND ABOLITION

EXERCISES FOR THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE IN YOUR WORK

EXERCISE 1

Get out materials and literature that your organization(s) use (or that the state or other organizations use). Go through these questions to try to understand more critically what the language is doing.

1. Who is this language addressing? Who is it easily understood by? Where is this literature used?

2. What categories are used to describe:
   - people
   - institutions
   - political systems and ideals

   What political views do those categories back up?

3. What political message is being sent—how is or isn't that abolitionist? What is the role of cages in the political program being suggested or implied?

4. How could you change the wording to more clearly oppose all aspects of the PIC? Or, if you're using material you disagree with as an example, how does the language support the PIC?

EXERCISE 2

Pick out one (or two, or however many you want to handle) words, and try to see how it is used, and how you might use it in a more radical way. For example, you might choose "punishment."

1. Brainstorm all the meanings it has—whose agenda(s) do those meanings serve?

2. What other words is it closely connected to? What do those connections do?

3. Where do you hear this word used most often? By whom?

4. What other words address some of the same issues and assumptions in different ways?

5. Are there ways to use the word "against itself"—to use it in a way that challenges the way it's most commonly used right now?

The point here is not just to change the words we use, but to examine how changing our words changes what we can see. It can also help point out what assumptions we might decide to hold onto. Maybe there is a difference between stealing a stereo and hurting another person. But saying non-violent and violent is only one way to show that difference, one set up by the state through its laws. We endorse that state action every time we use this difference. What are more complex ways to struggle with that difference?

> So it's not that I don't think that any reform work can be done; I just think that it's very, very important that people keep an abolitionist perspective to always check that against. And the way that we've always managed to do that here is to always talk about our short-term work, and what our day-to-day looks like, and what our long-term vision is. And so every time we're about to work on something or someone proposes it, we have this long-term vision about abolition to check it against, and to say "does this in any way contradict this" or get us off the track or make our path longer to get to this end goal, and if we sense that it does, then it's not an option for us.
>
> MIMI BUDNICK

BUDGET CUTS →	#DEFUNDPOLICE →	DISMANTLE
Cuts police department budget without any reductions to: ✗ Police powers ✗ Scope of operation ✗ Size of force ✗ Number of police contacts ✗ Legitimacy of practices of surveillance, policing, police violence, and punishment	Cuts police department budget with the intention of reducing: ✗ Scope of operation ✗ Size of force ✗ Police powers ✗ Police weaponry and equipment ✗ Police contacts, stops, arrests, tickets ✗ Collaboration with ICE ✗ Reliance on policing to address conflict, harm and need in any institution	Cuts police department budget with the intention of reducing the size of force and scope of operation to zero and not replacing it with a different law enforcement agency, or moving policing practices to new agencies and actors
No commitment to investing savings into meeting needs of criminalized and under-resourced communities	Commitment to investing funds into meeting needs of criminalized and under-resourced communities	Commitment to imagining, identifying, building, and resourcing the skills, relationships, institutions, and practices necessary to meet community needs, ensure accountability, repair, and transformation of conditions that contribute to harm, and create conditions that enable everyone to thrive

ABOLITION

Cuts the police department budget with the intention of eliminating police departments, surveillance, policing, and punishment in all institutions and aspects of society, and of values and practices that produce police, prisons, detention centers, and places of incarceration of disabled people	Investments are focused on universal public good and ensuring every individual has the resources and conditions to reach their highest human potential, and on creating a society based on mutual accountability, passionate reciprocity, and collective liberation

ABOLITION part 2

Hello
my name is

NO POLICE

OR

1312

(A C A B)

| TALK OF "CRIME" |

TALK OF CRIME USUALLY PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN GIVING AN EXPLANATION for the current punishment system. In addition, whether it is in the corporate media, the state government, or everyday discussions, talk of crime is often full of race and class prejudice. Often, it focuses just on poor urban neighborhoods of color. By contrast, government rules and actions are rarely described as crime.

Discussions of crime often take place without discussion about system-wide forms of oppression such as racism, capitalism, ableism, heterosexism, and sexism. As a result, talk of crime happens without the critical thinking needed to properly understand the conditions in which many acts of harm do take place in our society. How can we understand murder, theft, sexual abuse, police brutality, or any crime without understanding the social forces and economic conditions surrounding them?

Despite the controlling and warped ways that crime is often discussed, we can't just stop talking about crime. Few people will take us seriously if we avoid or sell-short a discussion of crime. In order to have successful discussions of crime, we need to deal with some questions.

•How can we undo the harmful myths and ideas that often surround talk of crime?

•How is crime defined and what are other ways we could define it?

•How should we critically understand the harm that does take place in our society?

In the end, we want to participate in discussions of crime in a way that draws out the people's abilities to reason effectively and not fall into oppressive ideas or mind-numbing fears caused by hysteria over crime.

EXERCISE: DISCUSSING CRIME

One way to undo harmful myths and ideas is to critically assess media portrayals of crime.

Consider the following study:

Many years ago sociologist Mark Fishman did a study that is still meaningful to today. Fishman looked at how the media created fictional "crime waves" with racially coded images. In a time when there was no evidence of an increase in violence against elderly New Yorkers, Fishman found that the three main newspapers of the city along with five local TV stations reported an upswing of violence targeting the elderly. The elderly were usually reported as being mugged, raped, and murdered by black or Latino youth with long criminal records. These youth generally came from inner city areas located near the residential areas of elderly whites that had fled those same areas. Because of the media made hysteria over the alleged "crime wave," new laws were created for more harsh and punishing policies such as longer prison sentences.[1]

Discuss the following questions:

1. How is crime portrayed in your local media? What crimes receive attention? What is the race and class of those who are portrayed as responsible?

2. Does the media assist you in understanding crime? If yes, how? If no, why not?

| THE QUESTION OF CRIME |

IN THE U.S. THE WORD "CRIME" USED IN WAYS THAT CHANGE depending on time and place. The state only uses the word to name those acts that are considered violations of the law. As a result, the very people potentially harmed

by a crime get left out of the picture. What would happen if we instead defined crime as harm?

Too often the word crime is used not to point out acts between people. Defining crime as harm would both broaden and narrow the list of things normally considered crimes. The definition might expand the list in two ways. First, the definition might cover system-wide forms of oppression such as racist institutional policies.

Second, it might also cover what might seem like mild forms of harm such as verbal abuse between family members. At the same time, the definition of crime as harm might narrow the list of crimes by decriminalizing acts not considered harmful. Acts such as drug possession and sex work (prostitution, for example) might then no longer be considered crimes.

We may or may not agree with the definition of crime as harm. Furthermore, we might want to put limits on what counts as harm when we define crime. Should verbal abuse be considered a crime? No matter how we feel, defining crime as harm causes us to ask questions that force us to rethink what a proper response to crime might be.

For instance, should everyone who harms get punished? But isn't punishment a form of harm, especially punishment in the form of prisons? Are such forms of additional harm

the price we have to pay in order to address harm? Do prisons do anything to repair the harm done? Do prisons even address harm in a way that reduces the chances of an individual harming others again?

|THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND HARM|

ALONG WITH QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGING HOW CRIME IS USUALLY DEFINED, abolitionist activists would do well to prepare themselves with an approach to understanding the crimes that often set off deep fears and concerns. Mistrust about abolitionism can come from strong reactions to crimes such as murder and forms of sexual violence.

As we mentioned in the discussion of crime and the media above, responding to such strong reactions first requires an understanding of the sources of the reaction. Is it personal experience? Is it media panic? Along with this we need to provide alternative ways of understanding harm itself. Alternative ways of understanding harm can prepare us for considering alternative responses to harm.

To understand harm we need informed observations of the conditions that accompany it. One way of looking at homicide rates, for example, is to look at them historically. Looking historically, the sharpest increases in homicide rates in the U.S. happened at the time of Prohibition when the manufacturing, sale, and transportation of alcohol became

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JAILBREAK
PGH

Hello my name is

AN ABOLITIONIST JAIL SUPPORT COLLECTIVE IN PGH

Jailbreak is an autonomous, free-form coalition of abolitionists in Pittsburgh working to support incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people inside of Allegheny County Jail.

We formed as a response to the horrendous conditions inside ACJ and as a response to the lack of resources formerly incarcerated people receive when they are re-entering society.

We do not believe in the possibility of ethical prison reform and instead advocate for the abolition of police, courts, jails and all detention centers. We believe no human should be in a cage and encourage the exploration and implementation of transformative justice and community accountability models of dealing with harm.

We have no formal leadership and encourage anyone (YOU!) to get involved. Everyone/all of us are accountable for the continuation of this project. Let's all work to create better conditions for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people in Pittsburgh.

CONTACT

Email: jailbreakpgh@protonmail.com
Twitter: @jailbreakpgh
Donate: www.gofundme.com/f/aftercare-for
Cashapp: $jailbreakpgh

SERVICES

- Tabling outside Allegheny County Jail (ACJ)
- Free $ for Bail
- Free $ for Commissary
- Transportation to/from court
- Transportation from jail
- Free groceries for formerly incarcerated people
- Free emergency housing

SUPPORTING ABOLITION
A QUICK GUIDE TO THE QUESTIONS

Here's a shorter version of our questions about supporting abolition. They aren't intended as a checklist, but rather as a quick guide to some of the questions we think it's most useful to ask. They're things to think about as your work develops to make it stronger, not an entrance test for the abolition club.

|LIFE AND SCOPE|
DOES YOUR WORK SEEK TO MAKE THE PIC A LESS WORKABLE SOLUTION TO PROBLEMS, AND TO LIMIT ITS REACH OVER OUR LIVES?

|WHERE ARE YOU WORKING?|
DOES YOUR WORK TAKE ON ASPECTS OF THE PIC THAT ARE MOST HARMFUL? DO YOU WORK TO FIGHT FORMS OF HARM LIKE WHITE SUPREMACY, HETEROSEXISM AND CLASS PREJUDICE BOTH IN YOUR CAMPAIGNS AND WITHIN YOUR GROUP?

|COALITIONS|
ARE YOU WORKING IN COALITIONS WITH ABOLITIONIST GOALS? ARE YOU WORKING TO HELP OTHER COALITION MEMBERS UNDERSTAND ABOLITION?

|NO TO NIMBY|
DOES YOUR WORK REJECT THE PIC EVERYWHERE?

|HEALTHY SOLUTIONS|
DOES YOUR WORK SUGGEST WORKABLE WAYS TO MAINTAIN SELF-DETERMINATION, MEANINGFUL SAFETY, AND COLLECTIVE HEALTH?

|WHOSE WORDS ARE YOU USING?|
DOES THE LANGUAGE YOU USE CHALLENGE COMMONLY ACCEPTED NOTIONS OF SAFETY, RESPONSIBILITY, AND JUSTICE?

|SHORT- TO LONG-TERM|
DOES YOUR IMMEDIATE WORK MAKE FUTURE CHALLENGES TO THE PIC POSSIBLE?

(PIC = PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX)

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illegal. While violence from alcohol abuse dropped during this period, violence on the whole increased.

We can compare that situation to contemporary homicide rates. While turf wars over the drug market are often listed as a factor, other factors include economic hardship, involvement in wars, and availability of health care. The influence of these factors changes over time. Trends within the larger society can shift the impact of particular factors.

As abolitionists, it is important to make people realize that when we understand the foundations of specific forms of harm such as homicide, we better understand the need for broad social change. Greatly reducing rates of particular kinds of harm depends upon our ability to change the social and economic conditions in which they take place.

|RESPONDING TO HARM|
HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO HARM?

OPENING GROUP EXERCISE

1. On one half of a large sheet of paper, list the general values you believe should guide responses to harm.

2. On the other half, brainstorm what you see as the main values and rules the government uses to deal with crime.

3. Compare and contrast each side of the paper. Discuss why the two sides differ.

Often one of the defining characteristics of the government is punishment. While there are those who benefit politically and economically from punishment, a key question is why people who do not benefit in these ways support punishment. The combination of fear, racism, heterosexism, sexism, and/or class prejudice feed into the impulse many have in wanting to punish. People often demand punishment as a kind of release for their fear and anger. At the same time, stereotypes that paint people as evil or take away their humanity make it easier to support their punishment. The more we identify with the person being punished, the less we want to see them punished.

ENDNOTE

1. This is an adaptation of a summary found in Jerome Miller's Search and Destroy: African-American Males in the Criminal Justice System, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

I believe we must make the system more victim-friendly, especially for those victims who are seeking healing. The system seems to encourage victims who are seeking retribution, since this becomes useful to the prosecution. However, the system is not equipped to handle those victims who want to heal.

WHEN WE USE ABOLITION AS AN ORGANIZING TOOL, it can be confusing how exactly to support abolition on a day-to-day level, especially when we work in coalition with people who aren't sold on abolition (yet). These are some guidelines, questions, and ideas to think about as you plan and evaluate your campaigns.

1. LIFE AND SCOPE

THE CRITICAL RESISTANCE MISSION STATEMENT SAYS "Because we seek to abolish the PIC, we cannot support any work that extends its life or scope."

What we mean by not "extending the life" is that the work doesn't try to make the PIC less harmful, or to fix it, but to make it less possible for the PIC to continue.

What we mean by not "extending the scope," is that any work we take up doesn't support cages that aren't clearly prisons (like mental hospitals or prison hospices) instead of prisons; it doesn't make it easier to feed people into prisons (by putting cops in schools, for example); and it doesn't validate any part of the PIC. So even when we interact with state agencies like courts or legislatures, it's done strategically and in a way that weakens those systems, not by appealing to them as potential sources of justice.

2. WHERE ARE YOU WORKING?

We organize in different ways and places, and we have to use different levers of power to undo the PIC. And while we have to work in as many ways and places as possible, we need to give the most emphasis, presence, and support to fighting the most harmful aspects of the PIC—especially within our groups. This can mean things like insisting on leadership from people of color, challenging heterosexism within your group, or highlighting white supremacy in your literature. It can also mean taking the time to work through how a campaign will connect the communities doing the campaign to the communities being targeted, and thinking about how fighting a specific part of the PIC can make the whole system weaker.

EXAMPLE It can be hard to tell when you're using state agencies strategically and when your appeal to a court or legislature confirms its power. For example, pressuring state legislatures to decrease funding for state corrections departments during budget crunches is a useful way to challenge PIC expansion. However, it's important to make clear that (most) legislators do support prisons and police, and that opposing the PIC isn't just a matter of balanced state budgets, and that while we might be able to force legislatures to support our work sometimes, it is always going to be a matter of political force (instead of a matter of faith in democracy or the idealism of a representative). Otherwise you might find yourself in some tricky situations (in one instance, activists in California pushing for cuts to the corrections budget recently were told that if they wanted to see a decrease in funding they should support cuts to prisoner education and job training programs). Sometimes you can work against this just by saying it: telling the media and people you're working with that a campaign is appealing to such-and-such state power strategically—not because you have faith in the government—can go a long way toward changing how people inside and outside your campaign understand that work.

3. COALITIONS

As abolitionists, figuring out whom to work with might seem hard when not very many identify as abolitionist. At the same time, abolitionist politics helps you see broad connections throughout the PIC, making coalitions more necessary and more exciting. But in coalition work it can be especially hard to sort out the "life and scope" questions. Some things to think about are:

•Is the coalition's work abolitionist even if the members aren't?

•How do you relate to the non-abolitionists in your coalition? How are you working to shift their goals from reform to abolition?

•Who's indirectly involved in your coalition? Who funds the groups you're working with? What other coalitions are those groups in?

4. NO TO NIMBY

Not-In-My-BackYard (NIMBY) organizing tries to prevent something harmful from happening in one community by directly or indirectly suggesting it should happen somewhere else (someone else's backyard). A good example would be a group that organizes against a prison proposed for their community not by saying the prison shouldn't be built, but that it needs to be built in another place. NIMBY campaigns are sometimes easier to "win," because the project can still be completed, so all it really does is move the problem temporarily out of sight. Effective abolitionist work means saying "no" to the PIC anywhere and everywhere.

5. HEALTHY SOLUTIONS?

Part of building toward abolition is building other institutions and practices to maintain and create self-determination for communities and individuals. This doesn't mean that every campaign against a part of the PIC has to offer an exact alternative, but we should be thinking about those things—if you're fighting a new prison, what do you want done with that money and land instead? If you're fighting against education and health care cuts, where from state funding of the PIC could you get money (e.g. replacing cuts to education with cuts to the prison or police budget).

6. WHOSE WORDS ARE YOU USING?

What are the ways you frame the problem, your work, your demands, and your solutions? Do they rely on the PIC's categories of criminals, fear, and punishment, or do they help us to build a world where we are accountable to each other and adress harm by providing for our collective and individual needs? Does your language help broaden people's general vision of fighting the PIC, or does it only spotlight a particular problem?

7. SHORT- TO LONG-TERM

How does your current project contribute to abolition? Does it offer immediate support to people harmed by the PIC? Is it a movement-building or educational tool? Does it connect issues that seem separate? What is it going to make possible down the line?

I think that as we develop prison abolitionism, we also need to build on the visions of communities that have organized around the basis of identity. By that I'm not saying that we need to go back to this narrow identity politics where we can't work together unless we come from the same racial group, or sexual group or whatever, but I do think that sometimes the prison abolitionist language begins to erase the language of race and identity and sexuality, and to a lesser extent gender. And if we do that, then it becomes less—it doesn't seem so relevant to communities of color that are very much used to organizing within a framework of anti-racist, African-American, Latino language. So I think that we need to develop an abolitionism and an abolitionist statement and vision that is totally infused with the cultures of the peoples who are incarcerated.

JULIA SUDBURY